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DISCARD

THE GROWTH OF ENGLISH DRAMA

BY

ARNOLD WYNNE, M.A.

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PREFACE

In spite of the fact that an almost superabundant literature of exposition has gathered round early English drama, there is, I believe, still room for this book. Much criticism is available. But the student commonly searches through it in vain for details of the plots and characters, and specimens of the verse, of interludes and plays which time, opportunity, and publishers combine to withhold from him. Notable exceptions to this generalization exist. Such are Sir A. W. Ward's monumental *English Dramatic Literature*, and that delightful volume, J. A. Symonds' *Shakespeare's Predecessors*; but the former extends its survey far beyond the limits of early drama, while the latter too often passes by with brief mention works concerning which the reader would gladly hear more. Some authors have written very fully, but upon only a section of pre-Shakespearian dramatic work. Of others it may generally be said that their purposes limit to criticism their treatment of all but the best known plays. The present volume attempts a more comprehensive plan. It presents, side by side with criticism, such data as may enable the reader to form an independent judgment. Possibly for the first time in a book of this scope almost all the plays of the University Wits

receive separate consideration, while such familiar titles as *Hick Scorner*, *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, and *The Misfortunes of Arthur* cease to be mere names appended to an argument. As a consequence it has been possible to examine in detail the influence of such men as Heywood, Udall, Sackville, and Kyd, and to trace from its beginning, with much closer observation than a more general method permits, the evolution of the Elizabethan drama.

I have read the works of my predecessors carefully, and humbly acknowledge my indebtedness to such authorities as Ten Brink and Ward. From Mr. Pollard's edition of certain *English Miracle Plays* I have borrowed one or two quotations, in addition to information gathered from his admirable introduction. Particularly am I under an obligation to Mr. Chambers, upon whose *Mediaeval Stage* my first chapter is chiefly based. To the genius of J. A. Symonds I tender homage.

For most generous and highly valued help as critic and reviser of my manuscript I thank my colleague, Mr. J. L. W. Stock.

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CHAPTER I

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EARLY CHURCH DRAMA ON THE CONTINENT

The old Classical Drama of Greece and Rome died, surfeited with horror and uncleanness. Centuries rolled by, and then, when the Old Drama was no more remembered save by the scholarly few, there was born into the world the New Drama. By a curious circumstance its nurse was the same Christian Church that had thrust its predecessor into the grave.

A man may dig his spade haphazard into the earth and by that act liberate a small stream which shall become a mighty river. Not less casual perhaps, certainly not less momentous in its consequences, was the first attempt, by some enterprising ecclesiastic, to enliven the hardly understood Latin service of the Church. Who the innovator was is unrecorded. The form of his innovation, however, may be guessed from this, that even in the fifth century human tableaux had a place in the Church service on festival occasions. All would be simple: a number of the junior clergy grouped around a table would represent the 'Marriage at Cana'; a more carefully postured group, again, would serve to portray the 'Wise Men presenting gifts to the Infant Saviour'. But the reality was greater than that of a painted picture; novelty was there, and, shall we say, curiosity, to see how well-known young clerics, members of local families, would demean themselves in this new duty. The congregations increased, and earnest or ambitious churchmen

were incited to add fresh details to surpass previous tableaux.

But the Church is conservative. It required the lapse of hundreds of years to make plain the possibility of action and its advantages over motionless figures. Just before this next step was taken, or it may have been just after, two of the scholarly few mentioned as having not quite forgotten the Classical Drama, made an effort to revive its methods while bitting and bridling it carefully for holy purposes. Some one worthy brother (who was certainly not Gregory Nazianzene of the fourth century), living probably in the tenth century, wrote a play called *Christ's Passion*, in close imitation of Greek tragedy, even to the extent of quoting extensively from Euripides. In the same century a good and zealous nun of Saxony, Hroswitha by name, set herself to outrival Terence in his own realm and so supplant him in the studies of those who still read him to their souls' harm. She wrote, accordingly, six plays on the model of Terence's Comedies, supplying, for his profane themes, the histories of suffering martyrs and saintly maidens. It was a noble ambition (not the less noble because she failed); but it was not along the lines of her plays or of *Christ's Passion* that the New Drama was to develop. It is doubtful whether they were known outside a few convents.

In the tenth century the all-important step from tableau to dialogue and action had been taken. Its initiation is shrouded in obscurity, but may have been as follows. Ever since the sixth century Antiphons, or choral chants in which the two sides of the choir alternately respond to each other, had been firmly established in the Church service. For these, however, the words were fixed as unchangeably as are the words of our old Psalms. Nevertheless, the possibility of extending the

application of antiphons began to be felt after, and as a first stage in that direction there was adopted a curious practice of echoing back expressive 'ah's' and 'oh's' in musical reply to certain vital passages not fitted with antiphons. Under skilful training this may have sounded quite effective, but it is natural to suppose that, the antiphonal extension having been made, the next stage was not long delayed. Suitable lines or texts (*tropes*) would soon be invented to fill the spaces, and immediately there sprang into being a means for providing dramatic dialogue. If once answers were admitted, composed to fit into certain portions of the service, there could be little objection to the composition of other questions to follow upon the previous answers. Religious conservatism kept invention within the strictest limits, so that to the end these liturgical responses were little more than slight modifications of the words of the *Vulgate*. But the dramatic element was there, with what potentiality we shall see.

So much for dramatic dialogue. Dramatic action would appear to have grown up with it, the one giving intensity to the other. The development of both, side by side, is interesting to trace from records preserved for us in old manuscripts. Considering the occasion first—for these 'attractions' were reserved for special festivals—we know that Easter was a favourite opportunity for elaborating the service. The events associated with Easter are in themselves intensely dramatic. They are also of supreme importance in the teaching of the Church: of all points in the creed none has a higher place than the belief in the Resurrection. Therefore the 'Burial' and the 'Rising again' called for particular elaboration. One of the earliest methods of driving these truths home to the hearts of the unlearned and unimaginative was to bury

the crucifix for the requisite three days (a rite still observed in many churches by the removal of the cross from the altar), and then restore it to its exalted position; the simple act being done with much solemn prostration and creeping on hands and knees of those whose duty it was to bear the cross to its sepulchre. This sepulchre, it may be explained, was usually a wooden structure, painted with guardian soldiers, large enough to contain a tall crucifix or a man hidden, and occupying a prominent position in the church throughout the festival. Not infrequently it was made of more solid material, like the carved stone 'sepulchre' in Lincoln Cathedral.

A trope was next composed for antiphonal singing on Easter Monday, as follows:

Quem quaeritis?
Jhesum Nazarenum.
Non est hic; surrexit sicut praedixerat: ite,
nuntiate quia surrexit a mortuis.
Alleluia! resurrexit Dominus.

Now let us observe how action and dialogue combine. One of the clergy is selected to hide, as an angel, within the sepulchre. Towards it advance three others, to represent three women, peeping here, glancing there, as if they seek something. Presently a mysterious voice, proceeding out of the tomb, sings the opening question, 'Whom do you seek?' Sadly the three sing in reply, 'Jesus of Nazareth'. To this the first voice chants back, 'He is not here; he has risen as he foretold: go, declare to others that he has risen from the dead.' The three now burst forth in joyful acclamation with, 'Alleluia! the Lord has risen.' Then from the sepulchre issues a voice, 'Come and see the place,' the 'angel' standing up as he sings that all may see him, and opening the doors of the sepulchre to show clearly that the Lord is

indeed risen. The empty shroud is held up before the people, while all four sing together, 'The Lord has risen from the tomb.' In procession they move to the altar and lay the shroud there; the choir breaks into the *Te Deum*, and the bells in the tower clash in triumph. It is the finale of the drama of Christ.

To illustrate at once the dramatic nature and the limitations of the dialogue as it was afterwards developed we give below a translation of part of one of these ceremonies, from a manuscript of the thirteenth century. The whole is an elaborated *Quem quaeritis*, and the part selected is that where Mary Magdalene approaches the Sepulchre for the second time, lamenting the theft of her Lord's body. Two Angels sitting within the tomb address her in song:

Angels. Woman, why weepest thou?
Mary. Because they have taken away my Lord,
And I know not where they have laid him.
Angels. Weep not, Mary; the Lord has risen.
Alleluia!
Mary. My heart is burning with desire
To see my Lord;
I seek but still I cannot find
Where they have laid him.
Alleluia!

[*Meanwhile a certain one disguised as a gardener draws near and stands at the head of the sepulchre.*]

He. Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?
Mary. Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.
He. Mary!
Mary [*throwing herself at his feet*]. Rabboni!
He [*drawing back, as if to avoid her touch*]. Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.

At Christmas a performance similar to the *Quem quaeritis*

took place to signify the birth of Jesus, the 'sepulchre' being modified to serve for the Holy Infant's birthplace, and Shepherds instead of women being signified by those who advanced towards it. The antiphon was in direct imitation of the other, commencing '*Quem quaeritis in praesepe, pastores?*' Another favourite representation at the same festival was that of the Magi. The development of this is of interest. In its simplest form, the three Magi (or Kings) advance straight up the church to the altar, their eyes fixed on a small lamp (the Star) lit above it; a member of the choir stationed there announces to them the birth of a Saviour; they present their offerings and withdraw. In a more advanced form the three Magi approach the altar separately from different directions, are guided by a moving 'star' down the central aisle to an altar to the Virgin, bestow their gifts there, fall asleep, are warned by an Angel, and return to the choir by a side aisle. For this version the service of song also is greatly enlarged. Another rendering of the story adds to it the interview between the Magi and Herod; yet others include a scene between Herod and his Councillors, and the announcement to Herod of the Magi's departure; still another extends the subject to include the Massacre of the Innocents. Finally the early Shepherd episode is tacked on at the beginning, the result being a lengthy performance setting forth in action the whole narrative of the birth and infancy of Jesus.

Here then is drama in its infancy. A great stride has been taken from the first crude burying of a crucifix to an animated union of dialogue and natural action. The scope of the Mystery (for so these representations were called) has been extended from a single incident to a series of closely connected scenes. In its fullest ecclesiastical form it consisted of five Epiphany Plays, of the Shepherds (or

Pastores), the Magi (or *Stella* or *Tres Reges*), the Resurrection (or *Quem quaeritis*), the Disciples of Emmaus (or *Peregrini*), and the Prophets (or *Prophetae*), the last perhaps intended as a final proof from the Old Testament of Christ's Messianic nature. Four points, however, deserve to be noted. The language used is always Latin. The subject is always taken from the Bible. Close correspondence is maintained with the actual words of the *Vulgate* (compare the Magdalene dialogue with John xx. 13–17). The Mystery is performed in a church. Each point, it will be observed, imposes a serious limitation.

There was one play, however, which broke loose from most of these limitations, a play of *St. Nicholas*, written by one Hilarius early in the twelfth century. The same author composed a Mystery of *Lazarus*, and an elaborate representation of *Daniel*, which must have made large demands on the Church's supply of 'stage properties'. But his *St. Nicholas* is the only one that interests us here. To begin with, the title informs us that the subject is not drawn from the Bible. The words, therefore, are at the discretion of the author. Further, though the medium is mostly Latin, the native language of the spectators has been slipped in, to render a few recurrent phrases or refrains. The story is quite simple, and humorous, and is as follows:

The image of St. Nicholas stands in a Christian church. Into the church comes a pagan barbarian; he is about to go on a long journey, and desires to leave his treasure in a safe place. Having heard of the reputation of St. Nicholas as the patron of property, he lays his riches at the foot of the statue, and in four Latin verses of song commits them to the saint's safe-keeping. No sooner is he gone, however, than thieves steal in silently and remove the booty. Presently the barbarian returns, discovers his loss, charges the image with faithlessness, and, snatching

up a whip, threatens it with a thrashing if the treasure is not brought back. He withdraws, presumably, after this, to give St. Nicholas an opportunity to amend matters. Whereupon one representing the real celestial St. Nicholas suddenly appears, perhaps from behind a curtain at the rear of the image, and seeks out the thieves. He threatens them with exposure and torment unless they restore their plunder; they give in; and St. Nicholas goes back to his concealment. When the barbarian returns, his delight is naturally very great at perceiving so complete an atonement for the saint's initial oversight. Indeed his appreciation is so genuine that it only needs a few words from the reappearing Saint to persuade him to accept Christianity.—Monologue and dialogue are throughout in song. The following is one of the three verses in which the barbarian proclaims his loss; the last two lines in the vernacular are the same for all.

Gravis sors et dura!
Hic reliqui plura,
Sed sub mala cura.
Des! quel dommage!
Qui pert la sue chose purque n'enrage.

A play of this sort, dealing with the wonder-working of a Saint, became known as a Miracle Play, to differentiate it from the Mystery Plays based on Bible stories.

St. Nicholas would be performed in a church. But there is a probably contemporaneous Norman Mystery Play, *Adam*, of unknown authorship, which shows that the move from the church to the open air was already being made. This play was performed just outside the church door, and though the staging remains a matter of conjecture, it may be reasonably assumed that the church represented Heaven, and that the three parts of a projecting stage served respectively as Paradise (Eden),

Earth, and Hell (covered in, with side doors). The manuscript of the play (found at Tours) supplies careful directions for staging and acting, as follows:

A Paradise is to be made in a raised spot, with curtains and cloths of silk hung round it at such a height that persons in the Paradise may be visible from the shoulders upwards. Fragrant flowers and leaves are to be set round about, and divers trees put therein with hanging fruit, so as to give the likeness of a most delicate spot. Then must come the Saviour, clothed in a dalmatic, and Adam and Eve be brought before him. Adam is to wear a red tunic and Eve a woman's robe of white, with a white silk cloak; and they are both to stand before the Figure (*God*), Adam the nearer with composed countenance, while Eve appears somewhat more modest. And the Adam must be well trained when to reply and to be neither too quick nor too slow in his replies. And not only he, but all the personages must be trained to speak composedly, and to fit convenient gesture to the matter of their speech. Nor must they foist in a syllable or clip one of the verse, but must enounce firmly and repeat what is set down for them in due order. Whosoever names Paradise is to look and point towards it.[1]

Glancing through the story we find that Adam and Eve are led into Paradise, God first giving them counsel as to what they shall and shall not do, and then retiring into the church. The happy couple are allowed a brief time in which to demonstrate their joy in the Garden. Then Satan approaches from Hell and draws Adam into conversation over the barrier. His attempt to lure Adam to his Fall is vain, nor is he more successful the first time with Eve. But as a serpent he over-persuades her to eat of the forbidden fruit, and she gives it to Adam, with the well-known result. In his guilt Adam now withdraws out of sight, changes his red tunic for a costume contrived

[1] Mr. E. K. Chambers's translation.

out of leaves, and reappears in great grief. God enters from the church and, after delivering his judgment upon the crime, drives Adam and Eve out of Eden. With spade and hoe they pass under the curse of labour on the second stage, toiling there with most disappointing results (Satan sows tares in their field) until the end comes. Let the manuscript speak for itself again :

Then shall come the Devil and three or four devils with him, carrying in their hands chains and iron fetters, which they shall put on the necks of Adam and Eve. And some shall push and others pull them to hell : and hard by hell shall be other devils ready to meet them, who shall hold high revel at their fall. And certain other devils shall point them out as they come, and shall snatch them up and carry them into hell ; and there shall they make a great smoke arise, and call aloud to each other with glee in their hell, and clash their pots and kettles, that they may be heard without. And after a little delay the devils shall come out and run about the stage ; but some shall remain in hell.[1]

Immediately after this conclusion comes a shorter play of Cain and Abel, followed in its turn by another on the Prophets ; but in all three the catastrophe is the same—mocking, exultant devils, and a noisy, smoky 'inferno'.

The most important characteristics of *Adam* are the venturesome removal of the play outside the sacred building, the increase in invented dialogue beyond the limits of the Bible narrative, and the 'by-play' conceded to popular taste. The last two easily followed from the first. Within a church there is an atmosphere of sanctity, a spirit of prohibition, which must, even in the Middle Ages, have had a restrictive effect upon the elements of innovation and naturalness. The good people of the Bible, the saints, had to live up to their reputation in

[1] Mr. E. K. Chambers's translation.

every small word and deed so long as their statues, images, and pictures gazed down fixedly from the walls upon their living representatives. This was so much a fact that to the very end Bible and Saint plays conceded licence of action and speech only to those nameless persons, such as the soldiers, Pharisees, and shepherds, who never attained to the distinction of individual statues, and who could never be invoked in prayer. Out of sight of these effigies and paintings, however, the oppression was at once lightened. True, these model folk could not be permitted to decline from their prescribed standards, but they might be allowed companions of more homely tastes, and the duly authorized wicked ones, such as the Devil, Cain, and Herod, might display their iniquity to the full without offence. Thus it is that in this play we find great prominence given to the Devil and his brother demons. They would delight the common people: therefore the author misses no opportunity of securing applause for his production by their antics. Throughout the play we meet with such stage directions as 'the devils are to run about the stage with suitable 'gestures', or the Devil 'shall make a sally amongst the people'. In this last the seeing eye can already detect the presence of that close intimacy between the play and the people which was to make the drama a 'national possession' in England. The devil, with his grimaces and gambols, was one of themselves, was a true rustic at heart, and they shrieked and shouted with delight as he pinched their arms or slapped them on the back. The freer invention in dialogue is equally plain. Much that is said by Adam and the Devil has no place in the scriptural account of the Fall, and the importance of this for the development of these dramas cannot be exaggerated.

The move into the open air was not accidental. Every year these sacred plays drew larger congregations to the festival service. Every year the would-be spectators for whom the church could not find standing room grumbled more loudly. In the churchyard (which was still within the holy precincts) there was ample space for all. So into the churchyard the performers went. The valuable result of this was the creation of a raised stage, made necessary for the first time by the crushing of the people. But alas, what could be said for the sanctity of the graves when throngs trampled down the well-kept grass, and groups of men and women fought for the possession of the most recent mounds as highest points of vantage? Those whose dead lay buried there raised effectual outcries against this desecration. To go back into the church seemed impossible. The next move had to be into the street. It was at this point that there set in that alienation of the Church from the Stage which was never afterwards removed. Clerical actors were forbidden to play in the streets. As an inevitable consequence, the learned language, Latin, was replaced more and more by the people's own tongue. Soon the festivals assumed a nature which the stricter clergy could not view with approval. From miles around folk gathered together for merriment and trading. There were bishops who now denounced public plays as instruments of the devil.

Thus the drama, having outgrown its infancy, passed from the care of the Church into the hands of the Laity. It took with it a tradition of careful acting, a store of Biblical subjects, a fair variety of characters—including a thundering Herod and a mischievous Devil—and some measure of freedom in dialogue. It gained a native language and a boundless popularity. But for many long years after the separation the *Epiphany Plays* continued

to be acted in the churches, and by their very existence possibly kept intact the link with religion which preserved for the public Mysteries and Miracles an attitude of soberness and reverence in the hearts of their spectators. The so-called *Coventry Play* of the fifteenth century is a testimony to the persistence of the serious religious element in the final stage of these popular Bible plays.

CHAPTER II

ENGLISH MIRACLE PLAYS

Most of what has been said hitherto has referred to the rise of religious plays on the continent. The first recorded presentation of a play in England occurred in Dunstable —under the management of a schoolmaster, Geoffrey— about the year 1110. Probably, therefore, the drama was part of the new civilization brought over by the Normans, and came in a comparatively well-developed form. The title of Geoffrey's play, *St. Katherine*, points to its having been of the *St. Nicholas* type, a true Miracle Play, belonging to a much later stage of development than the early *Pastores* or *Quem Quaeritis?*. We need not look, then, for shadowy gropings along the dramatic path. Instead we may expect to find from the very commencement a fair grasp of essentials and a rapidly maturing belief that the people were better guardians of the new art than the Church.

We know nothing of *St. Katherine* except its name. Of contemporary plays also we know practically nothing. A writer of the late twelfth century tells us that Saint Plays were well favoured in London. This statement, coupled with the fact that all sacred plays, saintly wonder-workings and Bible stories alike, were called Miracles in England, gives a measure of support to Ten Brink's suggestion that the English people at first shrank from the free treatment of Bible stories on the stage, until their natural awe and reverence had become accustomed to presentations of their favourite saints.

Passing over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, therefore, as centuries in which the idea of the drama was filtering through the nation and adapting itself to its new audiences, we take up the story again in the fourteenth century, before the end of which we know that there were completed the four great plays still preserved to us—the *Chester*, *Wakefield*, *York*, and *Coventry Miracles*. Early in that century the Pope created the festival of Corpus Christi (about the middle of June). To this festival we must fix most of our attention.

Glancing back a few pages we shall recall the elaboration of the play of the *Magi* from one bare incident to what was really a connected series of episodes from the scene of the 'Shepherds' to the 'Massacre of the Innocents'. It grew by the addition of scene to scene until the series was complete. But the 'Massacre of the Innocents' only closed the Christmas story. For the festival of Easter fresh ground must be broken in order that the 'Passion' might be fittingly set forth, and, in fact, we know that both stories in full detail eventually found a place in the more ambitious churches, any difficulty due to their length being overcome by extending the duration of the festivals. Then a time came when, even as St. Matthew was anxious to lay the foundations of his Gospel firm and sure in the past, so some writer of Bible plays desired to preface his life of Jesus with a statement of the reason for His birth, and the 'Fall of Man' was inserted. In writing such an introductory play he set going another possible series. To explain the Serpent's part in the 'Fall' there was wanted a prefatory play on 'Satan's Revolt in Heaven', and to demonstrate the swift consequence of the 'Fall', another play on 'Cain and Abel'; the further story of

the 'Flood' would represent the spread of wickedness over the earth; in fact, the possible development could be bounded only by the wide limits of the entire Bible, and, of more immediate influence, by the restrictions of time. That this extension of theme was not checked until these latter limits had been reached may be judged from the fact that in one place it was customary to start the play between four or five o'clock in the morning, acting it scene after scene until daylight failed. But this was when the Corpus Christi festival had become the chief dramatic season, combining in its performances the already lengthy series associated respectively with Christmas and Easter. Between the 'Massacre of the Innocents' and the 'Betrayal' (the point at which the Easter play usually started) a few connecting scenes were introduced, after which the Corpus Christi play could fairly claim to be a complete story of 'The Fall and Redemption of Man'. Admittedly of crude literary form, yet full of reverence and moral teaching, and with powers of pathos and satire above the ordinary, it became one single play, the sublimest of all dramas. To regard it as a collection of separate small plays is a fatal mistake—fatal both to our understanding of the single scenes and to our comprehension of the whole.

Yet the space at our disposal forbids our dealing here with every scene of any given play (or cycle, as a complete series is commonly called). The most that can be done is to give a list of the subjects of the scenes, and specimens of the treatment of a selected few. This list, however, should not be glanced through lightly and rapidly. The title of each scene should be paused over and the details associated with the title recalled. In no other way can the reader hope to comprehend the play in its fullness.

Here are the scenes of the *Coventry Play.*

1. The Creation.
2. The Fall of Man.
3. Cain and Abel.
4. Noah's Flood.
5. Abraham's Sacrifice.
6. Moses and the Two Tables.
7. The Prophets.
8. The Barrenness of Anna.
9. Mary in the Temple.
10. Mary's Betrothment.
11. The Salutation and Conception.
12. Joseph's Return.
13. The Visit to Elizabeth.
14. The Trial of Joseph and Mary.
15. The Birth of Christ.
16. The Adoration of the Shepherds.
17. The Adoration of the Magi.
18. The Purification.
19. The Slaughter of the Innocents.
20. Christ Disputing in the Temple.
21. The Baptism of Christ.
22. The Temptation.
23. The Woman taken in Adultery.
24. Lazarus.
25. The Council of the Jews.
26. The Entry into Jerusalem.
27. The Last Supper.
28. The Betraying of Christ.
29. King Herod.
30. The Trial of Christ.
31. Pilate's Wife's Dream.
32. The Condemnation and Crucifixion of Christ.
33. The Descent into Hell.
34. The Burial of Christ.
35. The Resurrection.
36. The Three Maries.
37. Christ Appearing to Mary.
38. The Pilgrim of Emaus.
39. The Ascension.
40. The Descent of the Holy Ghost.
41. The Assumption of the Virgin.
42. Doomsday.

One dominant characteristic is observed by every student of the original play, namely, the maintenance of a lofty elevation of tone wherever the sacredness of the subject demands it. The simple dramatic freedom of that day brought God and Heaven upon the stage, and exhibited Jesus in every circumstance of his life and death ; yet on no occasion does the play descend from the high standard of reverence which such a subject demanded, or derogate

from the dignity of the celestial Father and Son. That this was partly due to the Bible will be admitted at once. But there is great credit due to the writer (or writers) who could keep so true a sense of proportion that in scenes even of coarse derision, almost bordering on buffoonery, the central figure remained unsoiled and unaffected by his surroundings. A writer less filled with the religious sense must have been strongly tempted to descend to biting dialogue, in which his hero should silence his adversaries by superiority in the use of their own weapon. A truer instinct warned our author that any such scene must immediately tend to a lowering of character. He refused, and from his pen is sent forth a Man whose conduct and speech are unassailably above earthly taint, who is, amongst men, Divine.

Observe the impressive note struck in the opening verse. God stands amidst his angels, prepared to exercise his sovereign wisdom in the work of creation.

My name is knowyn, God and kynge,
My werk for to make now wyl I wende[1],
In myself restyth my reynenge,
It hath no gynnyng ne non ende;
And alle that evyr xal have beynge[2],
It is closyd in my mende,
Whan it is made at my lykynge,
I may it save, I may it shende[3],
After my plesawns[4].
So gret of myth[5] is my pousté[6],
Alle thyng xal be wrowth[7] be me,
I am oo[8] God in personys thre,
Knyt in oo substawns.

But before the world can be made, a rebellion has to be stamped out, and the same scene presents the overthrow

[1] go. [2] being. [3] destroy. [4] pleasure.
[5] might. [6] power. [7] wrought. [8] one.

of Satan—not after days of doubtful battle as Milton later pictured it, but in a moment at the word of the Almighty, 'I bydde the ffalle from hefne to helle'. At once follows the creation of the world and man.

Scene 2 brings Adam and Eve before us, rejoicing in the abundant delights of Eden. The guiding principle of the scene is the folly and wickedness of the Fall. Here is no thought of excuse for silly Eve. With every good around her, and with God's prohibition unforgotten, she chooses disobedience, and drags Adam after her. But Adam's guilt is no less than hers. The writer had not Milton at his elbow to teach him how to twist the Bible narrative into an argument for the superiority of man. Adam yields to the same sophistry as led Eve astray; and sin, rushing in with the suddenness of swallowed poison, finds its first home not in her breast but in his. The awful doom follows. In the desolation that succeeds, the woman's bitter sorrow is allowed to move our pity at last. Eating at her heart is the thought, 'My husbond is lost because of me', so that in her agony she begs Adam to slay her.

> Now stomble we on stalk and ston,
> My wyt awey is fro me gon,
> Wrythe on to my necke bon,
> With hardnesse of thin honde.

Adam says what he can to console her, but without much success. The scene ends with her lamenting.

The foul contagion, spreading over the earth, has been washed out in the Flood and a fresh start made before *Scene 5* introduces Abraham. In an earlier paragraph we have spoken of the pathos of which these plays were capable. Here in this scene it may be found. Abraham is, before all things else, a father; Isaac is the apple of

his eye. When as yet no cloud fills the sky with the gloom of sacrifice, the old man exults in his glorious possession, a son. Isaac is standing a little apart when his father turns with outstretched arms, exclaiming·

> Now, suete sone, ffayre fare thi fface,
> fful hertyly do I love the,
> ffor trewe herty love now in this place,
> My swete childe, com, kysse now me.

Holding him still in his arms the fond parent gives him good counsel, to honour Almighty God, to 'be sett to serve oure Lord God above'. And then, left alone for a while, Abraham, on his knees, thanks God for His exceeding favour in sending him this comfort in his old age.

> Ther may no man love bettyr his childe,
> Than Isaac is lovyd of me;
> Almyghty God, mercyful and mylde,
> ffor my swete son I wurchyp the!
> I thank the, Lord, with hert ful fre,
> ffor this fayr frute thou hast me sent.
> Now, gracyous God, wher so he be,
> To save my sone evyr more be bent.

'To save my sone'—that is the petition of his full heart on the eve of his trial. Almost at once the command comes, to kill the well-beloved as an offering to his Giver. And Abraham bows low in heartbroken obedience. Well may the child say, as he trots by the old man's side with a bundle of faggots on his shoulder, and looks up wonderingly at the wrinkled face drawn and blanched with anguish, 'ffayr fadyr, ye go ryght stylle; I pray yow, fadyr, speke onto me.' At such a time a man does well to bind his tongue with silence. Yet when at last the secret is confessed, it finds the lad's spirit brave to meet his fate. Perhaps the writer had read, not long before,

of the steadfastness with which children met persecution in the days of the Early Christian Church. For he gives us, in Isaac, a boy ready to die if his father wills it so, happy to strengthen that will by cheerful resignation if God's command is behind it. At the rough altar's side Abraham's resolution fails him; from his lips bursts the half-veiled protest, 'The ffadyr to sle the sone! My hert doth clynge and cleve as clay'. But the lad encourages him, bidding him strike quickly, yet adding sympathetically that his father should turn his face away as he smites. The conquest is won. Love and duty conflict no longer. Only two simple acts remain for love's performance: 'My swete sone, thi mouth I kys'; and when that last embrace is over, 'With this kerchere I kure (*cover*) thi face', so that the priest may not see the victim's agony. Then duty raises the knife aloft, and as it pauses in the air before its fearful descent the Angel speaks—and saves.

The moving character of the opening, leading up to the sudden catastrophe and, by its tragic contrast with what follows, throwing a vivid ray into the very centre and soul of that wonderful trial of faith; the natural sequence and diversity of emotions, love, pride, thankfulness, horror, submission, grief, resolution, and final joy and gratitude following each other like light and shadow; the little touches, the suggestion to turn the face aside, the last kiss, the handkerchief to hide the blue eyes of innocence; these are all, however crude the technique, of the very essence of the highest art.

As will be seen from the list, only two scenes more refer to Old Testament history, and then Jesus, whom the author has already intended to foreshadow in Isaac (whence the lad's submission to his father's will), begins to loom before us. The writer's religious creed prompted

him to devote considerable space to Mary, the mother of Jesus; for she is to be the link between her Son and humanity, and therefore must be shown free from sin from her birth. The same motive gives us a clue to the character of Joseph. That nothing may be wanting to give whiteness to the purity of Mary, she is implicitly contrasted with the crude rusticity and gaffer-like obstinacy of her aged husband. He is just such an old hobbling wiseacre as may be found supporting his rheumatic joints with a thick stick in any Dorsetshire village. He is an old man before he is required to marry her, and his protests against the proposed union, accompanied with many a shake of the head, recall to modern readers the humour of Mr. Thomas Hardy. This is how he receives the announcement when at length his bowed legs have, with sundry rests by the wayside, covered the distance between his home and the Temple where Mary and the Priest await him:

> What, xuld I wedde? God forbede!
> I am an old man, so God me spede,
> And with a wyff now to levyn in drede,
> It wore neyther sport nere game.

He is told that it is God's will. Even the beauty of the bride-elect is delicately referred to as an inducement. In vain. To all he replies:

> A! shuld I have here? ye lese my lyff:
> Alas! dere God, xuld I now rave?
> An old man may nevyr thryff
> With a yonge wyff, so God me save!
> Nay, nay, sere, lett bene,
> Xuld I now in age begynne to dote,
> If I here chyde she wolde clowte my cote,
> Blere myn ey, and pyke out a mote,
> And thus oftyn tymes it is sene.

Eventually, of course, he is won over; but the author promptly packs him into a far district as soon as the ceremony is over, nor does he permit him to return to Mary's side until long after the Annunciation.

'The Adoration of the Magi' (*Scene 17*) introduces us to a very notable person, no other than Herod, the model of each 'robustious periwig-pated fellow' who on the stage would 'tear a passion to tatters, to very rags', and so out-herod Herod. He is of old standing, a veteran of the Church Epiphany plays, and has already learnt 'to split the ears of the groundlings' with the stentorian sound of his pompous rhetoric. Hear him declaim:

As a lord in ryalté in non regyon so ryche,
And rulere of alle remys[1], I ryde in ryal aray;
Ther is no lord of lond in lordchep to me lyche,
Non lofflyere, non lofsumere[2],—evyr lestyng is my lay:
Of bewté and of boldnes I bere evermore the belle;
Of mayn and of myght I master every man;
I dynge with my dowtynes the devyl down to helle,
ffor bothe of hevyn and of herthe I am kynge sertayn.

In *Scene 19* we hear him issuing his cruel order for the killing of the children. But when the foul deed is done there await the murderer two kings whom he cannot slay, Death and the Devil. A banquet is in full swing, Herod's officers are about him, the customary rant and bombast is on his lips when those two steal in. 'While the trumpets are sounding, Death slays Herod and his two soldiers suddenly, and the Devil receives them'—so runs the terse Latin stage-direction.

Of the Devil we have more than enough in *Scene 22*, for it opens with an infernal council, Sathanas, Belyalle, and Belsabub debating the best means of testing the

[1] realms. [2] more worthy.

divinity of Jesus and of thereby making sure whether or no another lord has been placed over them. The plan decided upon is the Temptation. But great is Satan's downfall. 'Out, out, harrow! alas! alas!' is the cry (one that had become very familiar to his audience) as he hastens back to Hell, leaving the Heavenly Hero crowned with glorious victory. This is one of several scenes chosen by the author for the glorifying of his central character. Perhaps they culminate in 'The Entry into Jerusalem'.

The scenes that now succeed each other, marking each stage of the sorrowful descent to death, are notable chiefly for that quality to which attention has already been drawn, namely, the dignity which surrounds the character of the Hero. This dignity is not accidental. On the contrary it would have been easy to fall into the error of exciting so much compassion that the sufferer became a pitiably crushed victim of misfortune. With much skill the writer places his most pathetic lines in the mouths of the two Maries, diverts upon them the sharpest edge of our pity, and never for a moment allows Jesus to appear overwhelmed. When a Jew, in 'The Trial of Christ', speaks in terms of low insolence, addressing him as 'thou, fela (*fellow*)' and striking him on the cheek, Jesus replies:

> Yf I have seyd amys,
> Thereof wytnesse thou mayst bere;
> And yf I have seyd but weyl in this,
> Tho dost amys me to dere[1].

Again, in answer to Cayphas's outrageous scream of fury, 'Spek man, spek! spek, thou fop! . . . I charge the and conjure, be the sonne and the mone, that thou telle us and (*if*) thou be Goddys sone!', Jesus says calmly,

[1] injure.

'Goddys sone I am, I sey not nay to the!' Still later in the same scene, the silence of Jesus before Herod (sustained through forty lines or more of urging and vile abuse, besides cruel beatings) lifts Him into infinite superiority over the blustering, bullying judge and his wretched instruments. It is true that the Bible gives the facts, but with the freedom allowed to the dramatist the excellence of the original might have been so easily spoilt.

To Mary is reserved perhaps the deepest note of pathos within the play. The scene is 'The Crucifixion of Christ', and she is represented lying at the foot of the Cross. Jesus has invoked God's forgiveness for His murderers, He has promised salvation to the repentant thief, but to her He has said nothing, and the omission sends a fear to her heart like the blackness of midnight. Has she, unconsciously, by some chance word or deed, lost His love at the close of life? The thought is too terrible.

O my sone! my sone! my derlyng dere!
What[1] have I defendyd[2] the?
Thou hast spoke to alle tho[3] that ben here,
And not o word thou spekyst to me!

To the Jewys thou art ful kende,
Thou hast forgeve al here[4] mysdede;
And the thef thou hast in mende,
For onys haskyng mercy hefne is his mede.

A! my sovereyn Lord, why whylt thou not speke
To me that am thi modyr in peyn for thi wrong?
A! hert! hert! why whylt thou not breke?
That I were out of this sorwe[5] so stronge!

The remaining scenes bring on the final triumph of the Hero over Death and Hell, and the culmination of the

[1] how. [2] offended. [3] those. [4] their. [5] sorrow.

great theme of the play in the Redemption of Man. Adam is restored, not indeed to the Garden of Eden, but to a supernal Paradise.

Certain common features of the Miracles remain to be pointed out before we close our volume of the *Coventry Play*, for it will provide us with examples of most of them. One of the first things that strike us is the absence of dramatic rules. Not an absence of dramatic cohesion. To its audience, for whom the story of the Mission of Jesus still retained its freshness, each scene unfolded a further stage in the rescue of man from the bondage of Hell. It is not a mere matter of chronology. The order may be the order of the sacred chronicle, but to these early audiences it was also the order of a sacred drama. The 'Sacrifice of Isaac' is not merely the next event of importance after the 'Flood': it is a dramatic forecast of the last sacrifice of all, the Sacrifice of Christ. Even though we admit, as in some cases we must, that the Plays are heterogeneous products of many hands working separately, and therefore without dramatic regard for other scenes, it is not unreasonable to suppose that when the official text was decided upon, the several scenes may have been accommodated to the interests of the whole. Moreover, the innate relationship of scenes drawn from the Bible gives of itself a certain dramatic cohesion. Of the so-called Dramatic Unities of Time and Place, however, there is no suggestion; there is no unity of characters; there is no consideration of what may be shocking, what pleasing as a spectacle. Whoever saw the whole play through was hurried through thousands of years, was carried from heaven to earth and down to hell; he beheld kings, shepherds, high priests, executioners, playing their parts with equal effect and only distinguished by the splendour or meanness of their apparel; he was a witness to Satan's overthrow, to Abel's death, and was

a spectator at the flogging and crucifixion of Jesus. It is easy for those acquainted with the later drama (of Greene especially) to see the direct line of descent from these Miracles to the Shakespearian stage.

One interesting feature of these plays is the frequent appearance of Angels and Devils on the stage. This accustomed the audience to the entrance of the supernatural, in solid form, into the realm of the natural; and paved the way for those most substantial ghosts which showed themselves so much at home on the Elizabethan stage. We should be not far wrong, perhaps, in describing the later introduction of the Senecan Ghost into English drama as an innovation only in name: the supernatural had been a familiar factor in heightening dramatic interest long before *The Misfortunes of Arthur* or *The Spanish Tragedy* were written.—Of the Devils even more may be said. Their picturesque attire,[1] their endless pranks (not set down in the text), their reappearance and disappearance at the most unexpected times, their howls and familiar 'Harrow and owt! owt and alas!' were a constant delight, and preserved their popularity unexhausted for two hundred years, securing for them a place in the later forms of drama when the Miracles were supplanted by Moralities and Interludes. The Devil's near cousin, Herod, attained to a similar reputation and longevity. Has even modern melodrama quite lost that immortal type of the ranting, bombastic tyrant and villain?

The women in the play deserve notice. With the exception of Noah's wife, who was commonly treated in a broadly humorous vein, the principal female characters

[1] See the stage-direction at the end of 'The Trial of Christ', 'Here enteryth Satan into the place in the most orryble wyse, and qwyl (*while*) that he pleyth, thei xal don on Jhesus clothis'.

possess that sweet naturalness, depth and constancy of affection, purity and refinement which an age that had not yet lost the ideals of chivalry accepted as the normal qualities of a good woman. The mothers, wives, and daughters of that day would appear to have been before all things womanly, in an unaffected, instinctive way. Isaac (in the *Chester Miracle Play*), thinking, in the hour of death, of his mother's grief at home, says, 'Father, tell my mother for no thinge.' When Mary is married (*Coventry Play*) and must part from her mother, they bid farewell in this wise :

Anna. I pray the, Mary, my swete chylde,
Be lowe[1] and buxhum[2], meke and mylde,
Sad and sobyr and nothyng wylde,
And Goddys blessynge thou have. . . .

Goddys grace on you sprede,
ffarewel, Mary, my swete fflowre,
ffareweyl, Joseph, and God you rede[3],
ffareweyl my chylde and my tresowre,
ffarewel, my dowtere yyng.[4]

Maria. ffarewel, fadyr and modyr dere,
At you I take my leve ryght here,
God that sytt in hevyn so clere,
Have you in his kepyng.

The heartbroken words of Mary at the foot of the Cross have already been quoted. In the reconciliation between Joseph and Mary (*Scene 12*), in Mary's patient endurance of Joseph's bad temper on the journey to Bethlehem (*Scene 15*), in the mother's unrestrained misery at the loss of the boy Jesus and rapture on finding Him in the Temple (*Scene 20*), in the two sisters' forced cheerfulness by the bedside of the dying Lazarus and their sorrow at his death—nor do these by any means exhaust the number

[1] lowly. [2] obedient. [3] counsel. [4] young.

of favourable instances—there may be seen the basic elements, as it were, which, more deftly handled and blended, gave to the English stage the world's rarest gallery of noble women.

Darkness and grief are so woven into the substance of the Bible narrative that we should indeed have been surprised if the tragic note had not been sounded often throughout the play. That it could be sounded well, too, will have been seen from various references and from the Scene of Abraham's Sacrifice. Nevertheless, tragedy is a less interesting, less original, less English element than the comedy which pops up its head here, there, and everywhere. It is really a part of that absence of dramatic rules already indicated, this easy conjunction of tragedy and comedy in the same scene. English audiences never could be persuaded to forgo their laugh. After all, it was near neighbour to their tears throughout life; then why not on the stage? A funeral was not the less a warning to the living because it was rounded off with a feast. Nor was Jesus on the Cross robbed of any of the majesty and silent eloquence of vicarious suffering by the vulgar levity of those who bade him 'Take good eyd (*heed*) to oure corn, and chare (*scare*) awey the crowe'. The strong sentiment of reverence set limits to the application of this humour. Only minor characters were permitted to express themselves in this way. The soldiers at the Sepulchre, the Judaeans at the Cross, the 'detractors' in *Scene 14*, certain mocking onlookers in *Scene 40*, these and others of similar stage rank spoke the coarse jests that set free the laugh when tears were too near the surface.—These common fellows, by the way, are the prototypes of the familiar Citizens, Soldiers, Watch, of a later date: the Miracles were fertile in 'originals'.—Some characters there were, however, more individual, more of conse-

quence than these, who attained to an established reputation for their humour. The Devil's pranks have been referred to; Joseph's rusticity also; and the obstinacy of Noah's wife has been obscurely hinted at. Her gift lay in preferring the company of her good gossips to the select family gathering assembled in the Ark, and in playing with Noah's ears very soundingly when at length she was forcibly dragged into safety. Two short extracts from the *Chester Miracle* will illustrate her humour.

(1)

Noye. Wyffe, in this vessel we shall be kepte,
My children and thou; I would in ye lepte.
Noyes Wiffe. In fayth, Noye, I hade as leffe thou slepte!
For all thy frynishe[1] fare,
I will not doe after thy reade[2].
Noye. Good wyffe, doe nowe as I thee bydde.
Noyes Wiffe. Be Christe! not or I see more neede,
Though thou stande all the daye and stare.
Noye. Lorde, that wemen be crabbed aye,
And non are meke, I dare well saye;
This is well seene by me to daye,
In witnesse of you ichone[3].

(2)

Jeffate. Mother, we praye you all together,
For we are heare, youer owne childer,
Come into the shippe for feare of the weither,
For his love that you boughte!
Noyes Wiffe. That will not I, for all youer call,
But I have my gossippes all.
Sem. In faith, mother, yett you shalle,
Wheither thou wylte or [nought].
Noye. Welckome, wiffe, into this botte.
Noyes Wiffe. Have thou that for thy note!
Noye. Ha, ha! marye, this is hotte!
It is good for to be still.

[1] courtly. [2] counsel. [3] each one.

[The reader will easily supply for himself appropriate stage-directions.]

But of all these comic characters none developed so excellent a genius for winning laughter as the Shepherds who 'watched their flocks by night, all seated on the ground'. To see them at their best we must turn to the *Wakefield* (or *Towneley*) *Miracle Play* and read the pastoral scene (or, rather, two scenes) there. Here we come face to face with rustics pure and simple, downright moorland shepherds, homely, grumbling, coarsely clad, warm-hearted, abashed by a woman's tongue, rough in their sports. The real old Yorkshire stock of nearly six hundred years ago rises into life as we read.

In the first scene a beginning is made by the entrance of a single shepherd, grumpy, frost-bitten, and growling rebelliously against the probably widely resented practice of purveyance whereby a nobleman might exact from his farm-tenantry provisions and service for his needs, even though the farmer's own land should suffer from neglect in consequence. Thus he says,

No wonder, as it standys, if we be poore,
For the tylthe of oure landys lyys falow as the floore,
As ye ken.
We ar so hamyd[1],
For-taxed[2] and ramyd[3],
We ar mayde hand-tamyd,
Withe thyse gentlery men.
Thus they refe[4] us oure rest, Oure Lady theym wary[5]!
These men that ar lord-fest, thay cause the ploghe tary.
That men say is for the best we fynde it contrary.
Thus ar husbandys opprest, in pointe to myscary,
On lyfe.

[1] crippled. [2] overtaxed. [3] overreached. [4] rob.
[5] curse.

By way of excuse for his grumblings he adds in conclusion,

> It dos me good, as I walk thus by myn oone,
> Of this warld for to talk in maner of mone.

The second shepherd, who enters next, has other grounds for discontent. He, poor man, has a vixen for a wife.

> As sharp as thystille, as rugh as a brere,
> She is browyd lyke a brystylle, with a sowre loten chere ;
> Had she oones well hyr whystyll she couth syng fulle clere
> Hyr pater noster.
> She is as greatt as a whalle
> She has a galon of galle.

Conversation opens between the two, but rapidly comes to a dispute. Fortunately the timely arrival of a third shepherd dissipates the cloud, and they are quite ready to hear his complaints—this time of wide-spreading floods —coupled with further reflections on the hard conditions of a shepherd's lot. By this time the circle is complete, and a good supper and song are produced to ratify the general harmony. But now enters the element of discord which forms the pivot of the second scene. Mak, a boorish fellow shrewdly suspected of sheep stealing, joins them, and, after some chaffing, is allowed to share their grassy bed. In the night he rises, picks out the finest ram from the flock, drives it home, and hides it in the cradle. He then returns to his place between two of the shepherds. As he foresaw, morning brings discovery, suspicion and search. The three shepherds proceed to Mak's home, only to be confronted with the well concocted story that his wife, having just become the mother of a sturdy son, must on no account be disturbed. On this point apparently a compromise is

effected, the search to be executed on tip-toe, for the shepherds do somewhat poke and pry about, yet under so sharp a fire of abuse as to render them nervous of pressing their investigations too closely. Thus they pass the cradle by, and all would have gone well with Mak but for that same warm-heartedness of which we spoke earlier. They are already out of the house when a true Christmas thought flashes into the mind of one of them.

1st Shepherd. Gaf ye the chyld any thyng?
2nd Shepherd. I trow not oone farthyng.
3rd Shepherd. Fast agayne wille I flyng,
Abyde ye me there.

[*He returns to the house, the others following.*]

Mak, take it no grefe if I com to thi barne.
Mak. Nay, thou dos me greatt reprefe, and fowlle has thou farne.[1]
3rd Shepherd. The child wille it not grefe, that lytylle day starne[2]?
Mak, with youre leyfe, let me gyf youre barne
Bot vj pence.
Mak. Nay, do way: he slepys.
3rd Shepherd. Me thynk he pepys.
Mak. When he wakyns he wepys.
I pray you go hence.
3rd Shepherd. Gyf me lefe hym to kys, and lyft up the clowtt.
What the dewille is this? he has a long snowte.

The cat is out of the bag. Mak, with an assurance worthy of a better cause, declines to believe their report of the cradle's contents, and his wife comes nimbly to his aid with the startling explanation that it is her son without doubt, for she saw him transformed by a fairy into this misshapen changeling precisely on the stroke of twelve. Not so, however, are the shepherds to be persuaded to disbelieve their eyes. Instead Mak gets a good

[1] done. [2] star.

tossing in a blanket for his pains, the exertion of which sentence reduces the three to such drowsiness that soon they are fast asleep again. From their slumber they are awakened by the Angel's Song; upon which follows their journey with gifts to the newborn King.

Peculiar to the Coventry Miracle Play is the introduction of a new type of character, unhuman, unreal, a mere embodied quality. In *Scene 9*, where Mary is handed over by her parents to the care of the High Priest at the Temple, she finds provided for her as companions the five maidens, Meditation, Contrition, Compassion, Cleanness and Fruition, while near by await her seven teachers, Discretion, Devotion, Dilection, Deliberation, Declaration, Determination and Divination, a goodly company of Doctors indeed. Of all these intangible figures one only, Milton's 'cherub Contemplation', speaks, but the rest are quite obviously represented on the stage, though whether all in flesh and blood may be matter for uncertainty. Much more talkative, on the other hand, are similar abstractions in *Scene 11*. Here, in the presence of God, Contemplation and the Virtues having appealed for an extension of mercy and forgiveness to man, Truth, Pity and Justice discuss the question of Redemption from their particular points of view until God interposes with his decision in its favour. Mention of this innovation in the Miracle Play seems advisable at this point, though its bearing on later drama will be more clearly seen in the next chapter.

Little need be said of the verse commonly used in Miracles, save to point out the preference for stanzas and for triple and quadruple rhymes. An examination of the verses quoted will reveal something as to the variety of forms adopted. Those cited from *Scenes 1*, *4*, and *32* illustrate three types, while another favourite of the

Coventry author takes the following structure (A), with a variant in lines of half the length (B):

(A) *Angelus.*

Wendyth fforthe, ye women thre,
Into the strete of Galylé;
Your Savyour ther xul ye se
Walkynge in the waye.
Your ffleschely lorde now hath lyff,
That deyd on tre with strook and stryff;
Wende fforthe, thou wepynge wyff,
And seke hym, I the saye.
(*Scene 36.*)

(B) *Senescallus* (*to Herod*).

Sere kyng in trone,
Here comyth anone
By strete and stone
Kynges thre.
They bére present,—
What thei have ment.
Ne whedyr they arn bent,
I cannot se.
(*Scene 17.*)

Reference to the quotation from the *Wakefield Play* will discover in the north country author an even greater propensity to rhyme.

There remains to be discussed the method of production of these plays. Fortunately we have records to guide us in our suppositions. These date from the time when the complete Miracle Play was a fully established annual institution. It is of that period that we shall speak.

Plays had from the first been under official management. When, therefore, the Church surrendered control it was only natural that secular officialdom should extend its protection and guidance. Local corporations, recognizing the commercial advantages of an attraction which

could annually draw crowds of country customers into the towns, made themselves responsible for the production of the plays. While delegating all the hard work to the trade guilds, as being the chief gainers from the invasion, they maintained central control, authorizing the text of the play, distributing the scenes amongst those responsible for their presentation, and visiting any slackness with proper pains and penalties. Under able public management Miracle Plays soon became a yearly affair in every English town.

When the time came round for the festival to be held — Corpus Christi Day being a general favourite, though Whitsuntide also had its adherents, and for some Easter was apparently not too cold — the manuscript of the play was brought forth from the archives, the probable cost and difficulties of each scene were considered, the strength or poverty of the various guilds was carefully weighed, and finally as just an allocation was made as circumstances would permit. If two guilds were very poor they were allowed to share the production of one scene. If a guild were wealthy it might be required to manage two scenes, and those costly ones. For scenes differed considerably in expense: such personages as God and Herod, and such places as Heaven or the Temple, were a much heavier drain on the purse than, say, Joseph and Mary on their visit to Elizabeth. Where there was no difficulty on the score of finance, a guild might be entrusted with a scene — if there was a suitable one — which made special demands on its own craft. Thus, from the York records we learn that the Tanners were given the Overthrow of Lucifer and his fellow devils (who would be dressed in brown leather); the Shipwrights, the Building of the Ark; the Fishmongers and Mariners jointly, the scene of Noah and his family in the Ark;

the Goldsmiths, the Magi (richly oriental); the Shoers of Horses, the Flight into Egypt; the Barbers, the Baptism by John the Baptist (in camel's hair); the Vintners, the Marriage at Cana; the Bakers, the Last Supper; the Butchers and Poulterers, the Crucifixion.

As soon as a Guild had been allotted its scene it appointed a manager to carry the matter through. The individual expense was not great, somewhere between a penny and fourpence for each member. Out of the sum thus raised had to be paid the cost of dresses and stage-scenery, and the actors' remunerations (which included food during the period of rehearsals as well as on the actual playing days). No such crude simplicity as is made fun of in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* was admitted into the plays given in the towns, however natural it may have been to villages. Training and expense were not spared by rival guilds. As we saw in the directions for the acting of the old play of *Adam*, propriety in diction and behaviour on the part of the actors was insisted upon as early as the tenth century. An interesting record (dated 1462) in the Beverley archives states that a certain member of the Weavers' Guild was fined for not knowing his part. It would be quite a mistake, therefore, to suppose that fifteenth-century acting was an unstudied art. Similarly, caution must be used in ridiculing the stage-properties of that day. One has only to peruse intelligently one of the bald lists of items of expenditure to discover that a placard bearing such an inscription as 'The Ark' or 'Hell' was not the accepted means of giving reality to a scene. The Ark was an elaborate structure demanding a team of horses for its entrance and exit; while Hell-mouth, copying the traditional representations in mediaeval sculpture, was a most ingenious contrivance, designed in the likeness of gaping

jaws which opened and shut in fearful style, emitting volumes of sulphurous smoke, not to mention awesome noises. The 'make-ups' too were far from being the arbitrary fancies of the wearers. True, they possibly bore no great resemblance to the originals. But that was due to an ignorance of history rather than to carelessness about truth. The probability is that in many cases the images and paintings in the churches were imitated, as being faithful likenesses. One has merely to call to mind certain stained-glass windows to guess what sort of realism was reached and to understand how it came about that Herod appeared in blue satin, Pilate and Judas respectively in green and yellow, Peter in a wig of solid gilt (with beard to match), and Angels in white surplices.

For the stage a high platform was used, beneath which, curtained off from sight, the actors could dress or await their cues. Above the stage (open on all four sides) was a roof, on which presumably an 'angel' might lie concealed until the moment arrived for him to descend, when a convenient rope lent aid to too flimsy wings. Contrariwise, the devil would lurk in the dressing-room, if Hell-mouth were out of repair, until the word came for him to thrust the curtains aside, dart out, pull his victim off the stage and bear him away to torment. The street itself was quite freely used whenever conditions seemed to require it: messengers, for example, pushed their way realistically through the crowd; devils ran merrily about in its open space; and when Herod felt the whole stage too narrow to contain his fury he sought the ampler bounds of the market-place to rage in. Sometimes two or more stages were placed in proximity to accommodate actions that must take place at the same time. Thus we read in *Scene 25* ('The Council of the Jews') of the *Coventry Play*, 'Here xal Annas, shewyn hymself in his

stage, be seyn after a busshop of the hoold lawe, in a skarlet gowne, and over that a blew tabbard furryd with whyte, and a mytere on his hed, after the hoold lawe' (the dress is interesting); and a little further on, 'Here goth the masangere forth, and in the mene tyme Cayphas shewyth himself in his skafhald arayd lyche to Annas'; while yet a little later appears this, 'Here the buschopys with here (*their*) clerkes and the Phariseus mett, and (? in) the myd place, and ther xal be a lytil oratory with stolys and cusshonys clenly be-seyn, lyche as it were a cownsel-hous'. Again, in *Scene 27* ('The Last Supper') will be found this direction: 'Here Cryst enteryth into the hoûs with his disciplis and ete the Paschal lomb; and in the mene tyme the cownsel-hous beforn-seyd xal sodeynly onclose, schewyng the buschopys, prestys, and jewgys syttyng in here astat, lyche as it were a convocacyon.' This last is quoted for the additional inference that the Coventry stage remained in one place throughout the play; for the previous reference to the 'cownsel-hous' is that quoted, two scenes earlier. There was another custom, practised in Chester, and probably in other towns where the crowd was great. There the whole stage, dressing-room and all, was mounted on wheels and drawn round the town, pausing at appointed stations to present its scene. By this means the crowd could be widely scattered (to the more equitable advantage of shopkeepers), for a spectator had only to remain at one of these stations to behold, in due order of procession, the whole play acted. Thus mounted on wheels the stage took the name of a pageant (or pagond, in ruder spelling),—a name soon extended to include not only a stage without wheels but even the stage itself. It is used with the latter meaning in the Prologue to the *Coventry Play*.

With regard to the time occupied by the play, it is not

possible to do much more than guess, since plays varied considerably in the number of their scenes. In one town, as we have said, the whole performance was crowded into a single day, starting as early as 4.30 a.m. Chester, on the other hand, devoted three days to its festival, while at Newcastle acting was confined to the afternoons. Humane consideration for the actors forbade that they should be required to act more than twice a day. They were well paid, as much as fourpence being given for a good cock-crower (in 'The Trial of Christ'), while the part of God was worth three and fourpence: no contemptible sums at a time when a quart of wine cost twopence and a goose threepence. A little uncertainty exists as to the professional character of the actors, but the generally approved opinion seems to be that they were merely members of the Guilds, probably selected afresh each year and carefully trained for their parts. The more professional class, the so-called minstrels or vagrant performers (descendants of the Norman *jongleurs*), possibly provided the music, which appears to have filled a large and useful part in the plays.

The Saint-plays, the original miracle-plays, continued, and doubtless were staged in the same way as the Bible-plays. But the latter so completely eclipsed them in popularity that they appear never to have attained to more than a haphazard existence. Their nature was all against a dramatic subordination of the different plays to each other. Their subject was fundamentally the same; placed in a series, they could unroll no larger theme, as could the individual scenes of a Bible-play. For ambitious town festivals, therefore, they were too short. Few public bodies considered it worth their while to adopt them; and as a consequence only one or two have been preserved for our reading.

Those that remain with us, however, contain qualities which may make us wonder why they did not receive greater recognition. It may be that we misjudge the extent of their popularity, though survival is usually a fairly good guide. Certainly they shared, or borrowed, some of the 'attractive' features of their rivals: there was not lacking a liberal flavour of the horrible, the satanic, the coarse and the comical. Moreover, they possessed much greater possibilities for purely dramatic effect. The cohesion of incidents was firmer, the evolution of the plot more vigorous, the crisis more surprising, the opportunities for originality more plentiful. The very fact that they could not easily be welded together as scenes in a larger play is a testimonial to their art. They are more complete in themselves. They are, that is to say, a further stage on the way to that Elizabethan drama which only became possible when all idea of a day-long play had been discarded in favour of scenes more single and self-contained. The sacredness, also, of the saintly narrative was less binding than that of the Bible story. Those who had no compunction in caricaturing or coarsening the unholy or nameless people of the Scriptures would feel their liberty immensely widened in a representation of the secular and heathen world which surrounded their saint. This is clearly seen in the *Miracle of the Sacrament*, where the figure of Jonathas the Jew is portrayed with distinct originality. His long recital of his wealth in costly jewels, and the equally lengthy statement by Aristorius, the corruptible Christian merchant, of his numerous argosies and profitable ventures, are early exercises in the style perfected by Marlowe's Barabas. The whole story, from the stealing of the Sacred Host by Aristorius and its sale to Jonathas, right on through the villanous assaults, by the Jew and

his confederates, upon its sanctity, and the miraculous manifestations of its power, to Jonathas's final conversion and the restoration of the sacrament, is a very fair example of the power which these Saint Plays possessed in the structure of plots.

CHAPTER III

MORALITIES AND INTERLUDES

Miracle (Bible) Plays had three serious faults, not accidental, but inherent in them. They were far too long. Their story was well known and strictly confined by the two covers of the Bible. Their characters were all provided by the familiar narrative. It is true that a few additions to the canonical list were admitted, such as Cain's servant Garcio, Pilate's beadle, and Mak the sheep-stealer. Lively characters were also created out of nonentities, like the various Judaeans and soldiers, and the shepherds. But these were all minors; they had no influence on the course of the action, and the smallness of their part made anything like a full delineation impossible. They were real men, recognizable as akin to local types, but no more; one never knew anything of them beyond their simplicity or brutality. Meanwhile their superiors, clothed in the stiff dress of tradition and reverence, passed over the stage with hardly an idea or gesture to distinguish them from their predecessors of three centuries before.

The English nation grew tired of Bible Plays. There can be no doubt of this if we consider the kind of play that for a time secured the first place in popularity. Only audiences weary of its alternative could have waxed enthusiastic over *The Castell of Perseverance* or *Everyman*. Something shorter was wanted, with an original plot

and some fresh characters. To some extent, as has been shown, the Saint Plays supplied these requirements, and one is tempted to suspect that in the latter part of their career there was some subversion of the relative positions of the two rival types of Miracle. But what was asked for was novelty. Both forms of the Miracle were hundreds of years old, and both had to suffer the same fate, of relegation to a secondary place in the Drama. In letting them pass from our notice, however, we must not exaggerate their decline. The first Moralities appeared as early as the fifteenth century, but some of the great Miracles (e. g. of Chester and York) lasted until near the end of the sixteenth century. For some time, therefore, the latter must have held their own. Indeed the former probably met with their complete success only when they had become merged in the Interludes.

In its purest form the Morality Play was simply the subject of the Miracle Play writ small, the general theme of the Fall and Redemption of Man applied to the particular case of an individual soul. The central figure was a Human Being; his varying fortunes as he passed from childhood to old age supplied the incidents, and his ultimate destiny crowned the action. Around him were grouped virtues and vices, at his elbows were his good and his bad angel, while at the end of life waited Heaven or Hell to receive him, according to his merits and the mercy of God. The merits were commonly minimized to emphasize the mercy, with happy results for the interest of the play.

It is easy to see how all this harmonized with the mediaeval allegorical element in religion and literature. A century earlier Langland had scourged wickedness in high places in his famous allegory, *Piers Plowman*. A century later Spenser was to weave the most exquisite

verse round the defeats and triumphs of the spirit of righteousness in man's soul. Nor had allegory yet died when Bunyan wrote, for all time, his story of the battling of Christian against his natural failings. After all, a Morality Play was only a dramatized version of an inferior *Pilgrim's Progress*; and those of us who have not wholly lost the imagination of our childhood still find pleasure in that book. In judging the Moralities, therefore, we must not forget the audience to which they appealed. We shall be the more lenient when we discover how soon they were improved upon.

Influenced at first by the comprehensiveness of the plot in the Miracle Play, the writers of the early Moralities were satisfied with the compression of action effected by the change from the general to the particular theme. This had brought about a reduction in the time required for the acting; and along with these gains had come the further advantages of novelty and originality. Accordingly the author of *The Castell of Perseverance* (almost the only true Morality handed down to us) was quite content to let his play run to well over three thousand lines, seeing that within this space he set forth the whole life of a man from the cradle to the grave and even beyond. But later writers were quick to see that this so-called particular theme was still a great deal too general, leaving only the broadest outlines available for characters and incidents. By omitting the stages of childhood and early manhood they could plunge at once into the last stage, where, beneath the shadow of imminent destiny, every action had an intensified interest. Moreover, within such narrowed boundaries each incident could be painted in detail, each character finished off with more realistic traits. It was doubtless under such promptings that the original Dutch *Everyman* was

written, and the alacrity with which it was translated and adopted among English Moralities shows that its principle was welcomed as an artistic advance. An almost imperceptible step led straight from the *Everyman* type of Morality to the Interludes.

Before tracing further changes, however, it might be well to have before us a more definite notion of the contents of *The Castell of Perseverance* and *Everyman* than could be gathered from these general remarks. For a summary of the former we shall be glad to borrow the outline given by Ten Brink in his *History of English Literature*.[1]

'*Humanum Genus* appears as a new-born child, as a youth, as a man, and as a graybeard. As soon as the child appears upon the stage we see the Angel of Good and the Angel of Evil coming and speaking to him. He follows the Evil Angel and is led to Mundus (the World), who gives him Joy and Folly, and very soon also Slander, for his companions. By the latter—or, to stick to the literal expression of the poet, by this latter female personage—*Humanum Genus* is introduced to Greed, who soon presents to him the other Deadly Sins. We see the hero, when a young man, choosing Lust as his bedfellow; and, in spite of the endeavours of his Good Angel, he continues in his sinful career until at length Repentance leads him to Confession. At forty years of age we see him in the *Castle of Constancy* [or *Perseverance*], whither he has been brought by Confession, surrounded by the seven most excellent Virtues. . . . The castle is surrounded by the three Evil Powers and the Seven Deadly Sins, with the Devil at their head, and with foot and horse is closely besieged. *Humanum Genus* commends himself to his general, who died on the cross;

[1] Translation by W. C. Robinson, Ph.D. (Bohn's Standard Library).

but the Virtues valiantly defend the Castle; and Love and Patience and their sisters cast roses down on the besiegers, who are thereby beaten black and blue, and forced to retire. But *Humanum Genus* in the meantime has become an old man, and now yields to the seductions of Greed, who has succeeded in creeping up to the castle walls. The old man quits the Castle and follows the seducer. His end is nigh at hand. The rising generation, represented by a Boy, demands of him his heaped-up treasures. And now Death and Soul appear upon the scene. Soul calls on Mercy for assistance; but the Evil Angel takes *Humanum Genus* on its back and departs with him along the road to Hell. In this critical position of affairs the well-known argument begins, where Mercy and Peace plead before God on the one side, and Justice and Truth on the other. God decides in favour of Mercy; Peace takes the soul of *Humanum Genus* from the Evil Angel, and Mercy carries it to God, who then pronounces the judgment—and afterwards the epilogue of the play.'

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The plot of *Everyman* is as follows.

Everyman, in the midst of life's affairs, is suddenly summoned by Death. Astonished, alarmed, he protests that he is not ready, and offers a thousand pounds for another twelve years in which to fill up his 'Account'. But no delay is possible. At once he must start on his journey. Can he among his friends find one willing to bear him company? He tries. But Fellowship and Kindred and Cousin, willing enough for other services, decline to undertake this one. Goods (or Wealth) confesses that, as a matter of fact, his presence would only make things worse for Everyman, for love of riches is a sin. Finally Everyman seeks out poor forgotten Good-Deeds, only to find her bound fast by his sins. In this

strait he turns to Knowledge, and under her guidance visits Confession, who prescribes a penance of self-chastisement. The administration of this has so liberating an effect on Good-Deeds that she is able to rise and join Everyman and Knowledge. To them are summoned Discretion, Strength, Beauty and Five-Wits—friends of Everyman—and all journey together until, as they draw near the end, the last four depart. At the grave Knowledge stays outside, but Good-Deeds enters with Everyman, whose welcome to Heaven is announced directly afterwards by an angel. The epilogue, spoken by a Doctor, supplies a pious interpretation of the play.

Such are the stories of the two best known Moralities. From them we can judge how great a change had come over the drama. Nowhere is there any incident approaching the nature of 'The Sacrifice of Isaac', nowhere is there any character worthy to stand beside the Mary of the Miracle Play. Those are the losses. On the other hand, we perceive a new compactness—still loose, but much in advance of what existed before—whereby the central figure is always before us, urged along from one act and one set of surroundings to another, towards a goal which is never lost sight of. Also there is the invention which provides for these two plays different plots, as well as some diversity of characters. The superiority of the shorter play—*Everyman* contains just over nine hundred lines—to the older one is less readily detected in a comparison of bare plots, though it becomes obvious as soon as one reads the plays. It lies in a more detailed characterization, in a deliberate attempt to humanize the abstractions, in the substitution of something like real conversation for the orderly succession of debating-society speeches. The following extracts will illustrate this difference.

(1) From *The Castell of Perseverance.*

[GOOD ANGEL *and* BAD ANGEL, *in rivalry, are trying to secure the adherence of the juvenile* HUMANKIND: GOOD ANGEL *has already spoken.*]

Bad Angel. Pes aungel, thi wordes are not wyse,
Thou counselyst hym not a-ryth[1].
He schal hym drawyn to the werdes[2] servyse,
To dwelle with caysere, kynge and knyth,
That in londe be hym non lyche.
Cum on with me, stylle as ston:
Thou and I to the werd schul goon,
And thanne thou schalt sen a-non
Whow sone thou schalt be ryche.

Good Angel. A! pes aungel, thou spekyst folye!
Why schuld he coveyt werldes goode,
Syn Criste in erthe and hys meynye[3]
All in povert here thei stode?
Werldes wele[4], be strete and stye,
Faylyth and fadyth as fysch in flode,
But hevene ryche is good and trye,
Ther Criste syttyth, bryth as blode,
Withoutyn any dystresse.
To the world wolde he not flyt,
But forsok it every whytt;
Example I fynde in holy wryt,
He wyl bere me wytnesse.

[BAD ANGEL *replies, and then* HUMANKIND *speaks.*]

Humankind. Whom to folwe wetyn[5] I ne may,
I stonde in stodye and gynne to rave:
I wolde be ryche in gret aray,
And fayn I wolde my sowle save.
As wynde in watyr I wave.
Thou woldyst to the werld I me toke,
And he wolde that I it forsoke,
Now so God me helpe, and the holy boke,
I not[6] wyche I may have.

[1] aright. [2] world's. [3] company. [4] wealth. [5] know. [6] know not.

(2) From *Everyman*.

[EVERYMAN *has just met* FELLOWSHIP.]

Felawshyp. My true frende, shewe to me your mynde,
I wyll not forsake the to thy lyves ende,
In the way of good company.
Everyman. That was well spoken and lovyngly.
Felawshyp. Syr, I must nedes knowe your hevynesse.
I have pyte to se you in ony dystresse.
If ony have you wronged ye shall revenged be,
Though I on the grounde be slayne for the,
Though that I knowe before that I sholde dye.
Everyman. Veryly, Felawshyp, gramercy.
Felawshyp. Tusshe, by thy thankes I set not a strawe,
Shewe me your grefe and saye no more.
Everyman. If I my herte sholde to you breke,
And than you to tourne your mynde fro me,
And wolde not me comforte whan ye here me speke,
Then sholde I ten tymes soryer be.
Felawshyp. Syr, I saye as I wyll do in dede.
Everyman. Than be you a good frende at nede,
I have founde you true herebefore.
Felawshyp. And so ye shall evermore,
For, in fayth, and thou go to hell
I wyll not forsake the by the waye.

[EVERYMAN *now explains his need for a companion along the road to the next world.*]

Felawshyp. That is mater in dede! Promyse is duty,
But and I sholde take suche vyage on me,
I knowe it well, it sholde be to my payne;
Also it make me aferde, certayne.
But let us take counsell here as well as we can,
For your wordes wolde fere a stronge man.
Everyman. Why, ye sayd, yf I had nede,
Ye wolde me never forsake, quycke ne deed,
Though it were to hell, truely.
Felawshyp. So I sayd certaynely,
But suche pleasures be set a syde, the sothe to saye;
And also, yf we toke suche a journaye,
Whan sholde we come agayne?

Everyman. Naye, never agayne, tyll the daye of dome.
Felawshyp. In fayth, than wyll not I come there.
Who hath you these tydynges brought?
Everyman. In dede, deth was with me here.
Felawshyp. Now, by God that all hathe bought,
If deth were the messenger,
For no man that is lyvynge to daye
I wyll not go that lothe journaye,
Not for the fader that bygate me.
Everyman. Ye promysed other wyse, parde.
Felawshyp. I wote well I say so, truely,
And yet yf thou wylte ete and drynke and make good chere,
Or haunt to women, the lusty company,
I wolde not forsake you whyle the day is clere,
Trust me veryly.
Everyman. Ye, therto ye wolde be redy:
To go to myrthe, solas[1] and playe
Your mynde wyll soner apply
Than to bere me company in my longe journaye.

The difference between the plays is clearer now. Somewhere we have met such a fellow as Fellowship; at some time we have taken part in such a conversation, and heard the gushing acquaintance of prosperous days excuse himself in the hour of trouble. But never in daily life was met so dull a creature as one of those angels, nor ever was heard conversation like theirs.

Let us return to trace the change to the Interlude. Quite a short step will carry us to it.

We have said that Moralities gave to the drama originality in plot and in characters. This statement invites qualification, for its truth is confined to rather narrow limits, in fact, to the early days of this new kind of play. Let a few Moralities be produced and the rest will be found to be treading very closely in their footsteps. For

[1] solace.

there are not possible many divergent variations of a story that must have for its central figure Man in his three ages and must express itself allegorically. Nor is the list of Virtues and Vices so large that it can provide an inexhaustible supply of fresh characters. However ingenious authors may be, the day is quickly reached when parallelism drives their audience to a wearisome consciousness that the speeches have all been heard before, that the next step in the plot can be foretold to a nicety. Something of this was perceived by the author of *Everyman*. With bold strokes of the pen he drew a line through two-thirds of the orthodox plot, crossed off from the list of characters the hackneyed Good and Bad Angels, and, against the old names that must still remain, seems to have jotted for himself this reminder, 'Try human types.' So, at least, we may imagine him doing. The figures that occupy the stage of the old Morality are for the most part, like the two Angels, mere mouthpieces for pious or wicked counsels. Fellowship and his companions, on the other hand, are selected examples from well-known and clearly-defined classes of mankind. They are not more than that. All we know of Fellowship is his ready faculty for excusing himself when help is needed. He has no traits to distinguish him from others of his kind. If we describe to one another the men or women whom he recalls to our memory we find that the descriptions differ widely in all but the one common characteristic. In other words, he is a type. The step which brings us to the Interludes is the conversion of the type into an individual with special marks about him peculiar to himself. It is an ingenious suggestion, that the idea first found expression in an attempt to excite interest by adding to a character one or two of the peculiarities of a local celebrity (miser, prodigal, or beggar) known for

the quality typified. If this was so, it was an interesting reversion to the methods of Aristophanes. But it is only a guess. What is certain is that in the Interludes we find the 'type' gradually assuming a greater complexity, a larger measure of those minor features which make the ordinary man interesting. Significantly enough, the last thing to be acquired was a name such as ordinary men bear. A few characters attained to that certificate of individuality, but even Heywood, the master of the Interlude, preferred class names, such as Palmer, Pardoner, or Pedlar. This should warn us not to expect too much from the change. To the very end some features of the earliest Moralities are discernible : we shall meet Good Angel and Bad Angel in one of Marlowe's plays. After all, the interval of time is not so very great. *The Castell of Perseverance* was written probably about the middle of the fifteenth century ; *Everyman* may be assigned to the close of that century or the beginning of the next ; one of the earliest surviving Interludes, *Hick Scorner*, has been dated 'about 1520–25' ; and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* belongs probably to the year 1588.

Let us turn to *Hick Scorner* and see the new principle of characterization at work. How much of the old is blended with it may be seen in the opening speech, which is delivered by as colourless an abstraction as ever advocated a virtuous life in the Moralities. A good old man, Pity, sits alone, describing himself to his hearers. To him comes Contemplation, and shortly afterwards Perseverance, both younger men but just as undeniably 'Virtues'. Each explains his nature to the audience before discovering the presence of Pity, but they quickly fall into a highly edifying conversation. Fortunately for us Contemplation and Perseverance have other engagements, which draw them away. Pity relapses into a

corner and silence. Thereupon two men of a very different type take the boards. The first comer is Freewill, a careless, graceless youth by his own account; Imagination, who follows, is worse, being one of those hardened, ready-witted, quick-tempered rogues whom providence saves from drowning for another fate. He is sore, this second fellow, with sitting in the stocks; yet quite unrepentant, boasting, rather, of his skill in avoiding heavier penalties. That others come to the gallows is owing to their bad management. As he says,

> For, and they could have carried by craft as I can,
> In process of years each of them should be a gentleman.
> Yet as for me I was never thief;
> [i. e. *was never proved one.*]
> If my hands were smitten off, I can steal with my teeth;
> For ye know well, there is craft in daubing[1]:
> I can look in a man's face and pick his purse,
> And tell new tidings that was never true, i-wis,
> For my hood is all lined with lesing[2].

Nevertheless once he was very nearly caught. And he narrates the incident with so much circumstantial detail that it would be a pity not to have his own words.

> *Imagination.* Yes, once I stall a horse in the field,
> And leapt on him for to have ridden my way.
> At the last a baily me met and beheld,
> And bad me stand: then was I in a fray[3].
> He asked whither with that horse I would gone;
> And then I told him it was mine own.
> He said I had stolen him; and I said nay.
> This is, said he, my brother's hackney.
> For, and I had not excused me, without fail,
> By our lady, he would have lad me straight to jail.

[1] stealing. [2] lying. [3] fright.

And then I told him the horse was like mine,
A brown bay, a long mane, and did halt behine;
Thus I told him, that such another horse I did lack;
And yet I never saw him, nor came on his back.
So I delivered him the horse again.
And when he was gone, then was I fain[1]:
For and I had not excused me the better,
I know well I should have danced in a fetter.

Freewill. And said he no more to thee but so?

Imagination. Yea, he pretended me much harm to do;
But I told him that morning was a great mist,
That what horse it was I ne wist:
Also I said, that in my head I had the megrin,
That made me dazzle so in mine eyen,
That I might not well see.
And thus he departed shortly from me.

By this time a third party has approached; for an impatient inquiry for Hick Scorner immediately brings that redoubtable gentleman upon the stage, possibly slightly the worse for liquor, seeing that his first words are those of one on a ship at sea. They may, however, indicate merely a seafaring man, for he has been a great traveller in his time, 'in France, Ireland, and in Spain, Portingal, Sevile, also in Almaine,' and many places more, even as far as 'the land of Rumbelow, three mile out of hell'. He is acquainted with the names of many vessels, of which 'the *Anne* of Fowey, the *Star* of Saltash, with the *Jesus* of Plymouth' are but a few. With something of a chuckle he adds that a fleet of these ships bound for Ireland with a crowded company of all the godly persons of England—'piteous people, that be of sin destroyers', 'mourners for sin, with lamentation', and 'good rich men that helpeth folk out of prison'—has been wrecked on a quicksand and the whole company drowned. Next he has an ill-sounding report of his own last voyage to

[1] glad.

give. When that is finished Imagination proposes an adjournment for pleasures more active than conversation, where purses may be had for the asking.

> Every man bear his dagger naked in his hand,
> And if we meet a true man, make him stand,
> Or else that he bear a stripe ;
> If that he struggle, and make any work,
> Lightly strike him to the heart,
> And throw him into Thames quite.

This suggestion meets with the approval of Freewill, who, however, takes the opportunity to ask after Imagination's father in such unmannerly terms as at once to rouse his friend's quick temper. In a moment a quarrel is assured, nor does Hick Scorner's attempted mediation produce any other reward than a shrewd blow on the head. At this precise instant, however, old Pity, who has remained unnoticed, and who is unwarned by the fate of Hick Scorner, pushes forward with an idea of intervention. As might have been foreseen, the three rascals promptly unite in rounding upon him. They insult him, they threaten him, they raise malicious lying charges against him, and finally they clap him in irons and leave him—Imagination being the ringleader throughout. Left alone once more Pity sings a lament over the wickedness of the times, whereof the doleful refrain is 'Worse was it never'. A ray of light in his affliction comes with the return of Contemplation and Perseverance, who, releasing him, send him off to fetch his persecutors back. Fortune is on their side, for scarcely has Pity gone when Freewill enters by himself with a wonderful account of his latest roguery—the robbing of a till—for the ears of his audience. Contemplation and Perseverance, stout enough of limb when they have a mind to use force, listen quietly to the end and then calmly inform him

that he is their prisoner, a fact which no amount of blustering defiance can alter. Nevertheless, though he has thus openly confessed his own guilt, they have no wish to proceed to extremes. If only he will give up his wicked life they will be content, made happy by the knowledge of his salvation. It is a strange sort of conversion, Freewill's tongue running constantly, with an obvious relish, on the various punishments he has endured; but at length he capitulates, accepting Perseverance as his future guide, and donning the uniform of virtuous service.

> Huff, huff, huff! who sent after me?
> I am Imagination, full of jollity.
> Lord, that my heart is light!
> When shall I perish? I trow, never.

In such a manner does the bolder sinner leap to the front. He scans the little group in search of his friend and stares wonderingly on perceiving him in his new dress. Now begins a second tussle for the winning of a soul. The fashion of it can be inferred from the following fragment.

Perseverance. Imagination, think what God did for thee;
> On Good Friday He hanged on a tree,
> And spent all His precious blood;
> A spear did rive His heart asunder,
> The gates He brake up with a clap of thunder,
> And Adam and Eve there delivered He.

Imagination. What devil! what is that to me?
> By God's fast, I was ten year in Newgate,
> And many more fellows with me sat,
> Yet he never came there to help me ne my company.

Contemplation. Yes, he holp thee, or thou haddest not been here now.

Imagination. By the mass, I cannot show you,
> For he and I never drank together,
> Yet I know many an ale stake[1].

[1] alehouse sign.

In the end, mainly through the personal appeal of his friend, Imagination too yields and accepts the guidance of Perseverance, Freewill transferring his allegiance to Contemplation. As Hick Scorner never returns, the double conversion brings the play to a close.

Rising from the perusal of *Hick Scorner* we confess that we have made a new acquaintance: we have met Imagination and have not left him until we have learnt a good deal about him; how he fled from a catchpole but lost his purse in the flight, how he and Hick Scorner were shackled together in Newgate without money to pay for an upper room, how brazen-faced his lies were, how near he was to hanging, how ingenious were his excuses, and many other facts besides. We have seen him, too, as the ringleader in mischief and the arrantest rogue in the play. Freewill and Hick Scorner make less impression on us; they are more cloudy in outline, more like types. As for Pity, Contemplation and Perseverance, they are merely talking-machines. We must keep an eye on Imagination, as possessing a dramatic value likely to be needed again.

We shall have been disappointed in the plot. That part of the drama seems to be getting worse. Humankind was at least gaining fresh experience in *The Castell of Perseverance*; he was even besieged in a fortress and had the narrowest escape in the world from being carried off to Hell. Everyman's startling doom, his eager quest for a companion on his journey, and his zealous self-discipline keep us to the end in a state of concern for his ultimate fate. But what interest have we in Contemplation, Freewill and the rest, apart from what they say? No suggestion is thrown out at the beginning that two of the rogues are to be reclaimed: their fate concerns us not at all. The quarrel, and the ill-treatment of poor old

Pity, are the merest by-play, with no importance whatsoever as a step in the evolution of a plot. Indeed it is open to question whether there is a plot. There are speeches, there is conversation, there is some scuffling, and there is a happy ending, but there is no guiding thread running through the story, no discernible objective steadily aimed at from the start. It looks as though the new interest in drawing (or seeing) a real human individual has monopolized the whole attention; that for the time being characterization has driven plot-building completely into the shade.

A curious, yet not unnatural, thing has happened. In *The Castell of Perseverance* Humankind was more acted upon than acting. The real force of the action lay in the antagonism between the Virtues and Vices, the Good Angel and the Bad Angel, an antagonism so inveterate that even if the temporary object of their struggle were removed, the strife would still break out again from the sheer viciousness of the Vices. This instinctive hostility between Virtues and Vices supplies the groundwork of the Interludes. They dismiss Humankind from the stage. He was always a weak, oscillating sort of creature. Sound, forceful Abstractions and Types were wanted, which could be worked up into thoroughgoing rascals or heroes, rascality having all the preference. Any underlying thread, therefore, that there may be in *Hick Scorner* is this rivalry and embitterment between the wicked sort and the virtuous. We shall observe that already one of the rogues is taking precedence of the others in dramatic importance, in fullness of portraiture, and, of course, in villany.

Like Will to Like—of an uncertain date prior to 1568 (when it was printed) but almost certainly a later production than many Interludes which we omit here,

notably Heywood's—illustrates the development of some of these changes. In brief outline its story is as follows.

Nichol Newfangle receives a commission from Lucifer to go through the world bringing similar persons together, like to like. Accordingly he acts as arbiter between Ralph Roister and Tom Tosspot in a dispute as to which of the two is the greater knave, and, deciding that both are equal, promises them equal shares in certain property he has at disposal. Next, meeting Cuthbert Cutpurse and Pierce Pickpurse, he gives them news of a piece of land which has fallen to them by unexpected succession. He then adjourns with his friends to an alehouse, leaving the stage to Virtuous Living, who has already chidden him for his sins who now, after a long monologue or chant, is rewarded by Good Fame and Honour, the servants of God's Promise. On the departure of these Virtues, Newfangle returns, shortly followed by Ralph and Tom, penniless from a game of dice, and more than ever anxious for the property. This last proves to be no more than a beggar's bag, bottle and staff, suitable to their present condition, but so little satisfying, that Newfangle receives a terrible drubbing for his trick. Judge Severity arrives on the scene conveniently to lecture him severely and witness his second knavish device, which is no other than to hand over to the Judge the two fugitives from justice, Cutpurse and Pickpurse, for the piece of land of which he spoke is the gallows. Hankin Hangman takes possession of his victims, and the Devil, entering with a 'Ho, ho, ho!', carries Newfangle away with him on his back. Virtuous Life, Honour and Good Fame bring the play to a proper conclusion with prayers for the Queen, Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, this customary exhibition of loyalty being rounded off with a hymn.

This play, though so much later in date than *Hick Scorner*, shows no improvement in plot. Nor, perhaps, ought we to expect that it should. An Interlude, as its name implies, was originally only a kind of stop-gap, an entrée of light entertainment between other events ; and what so welcome for this purpose as the inconsequential dialogue, by-play, and mutual trickery of sundry 'lewd fellows of the baser sort'? When it extended its sphere from the castle banqueting-hall to the street or inn-yard no greater excellence was expected from it. Its brevity saved it from tediousness, and the Virtues, whom the lingering influence of religion upon the drama saved from the wreck of the Morality Plays, were given a more and more subordinate place. In this play they serve to point the moral by showing the reward that comes to righteousness in sharp contrast to the poverty and vile death that are the meed of wickedness. But it is noticeable that they are quite apart from the other group, much more so than was the case in *Hick Scorner*.

Instead of a plot we find an increasing admixture of buffoonery, without which no Interlude could be regarded as complete. Herein we see the influence of certain farcical entertainments brought over by the Norman *jongleurs* (or travelling minstrel-comedians). Just as the French *fabliaux* inspired Chaucer's coarser tales, so the French *farce* stimulated the natural inclination of the English taste to broad humour and rough-and-tumble buffoonery on the stage. Held in some restraint by the dominant religious element, it grew stronger as the latter weakened. Thus, in *Like Will to Like* a certain Hance enters half-intoxicated, roaring out a drinking song until the sudden collapse of his voice compels him to recite the rest in the thick stutter of a drunken man. He carries a pot of ale in his hand, from which he drinks to the

health of Tom Tosspot, giving the toast with a 'Ca-ca-carouse to-to-to thee, go-go-good Tom'—which is but an indifferent hexameter. At the suggestion of Newfangle 'he danceth as evil-favoured as may be demised, and in the dancing he falleth down, and when he riseth he must groan', according to the stage-direction. When he does rise, doubtless with unlimited comicality of effort, he staggers into a chair and proceeds to snore loudly. All this is accompanied by a fitting fashion of conversation. We can only hope that the author's attempts at humour met with the applause he clearly expected. We believe they did, for he was only copying a widespread custom.

Of far more importance than Hance, however, are the two characters, the Devil and Nichol Newfangle. They invite joint treatment by their own declared relationship and by the close union which stage tradition quickly gave to them. Most of us will remember Shakespeare's song from *Twelfth Night* bearing on these two notorious companions, their quaint garb, and their laughter-raising antics.

I am gone, sir,
And anon, sir,
I'll be with you again,
In a trice,
Like to the old Vice,
Your need to sustain;
Who, with dagger of lath,
In his rage and his wrath,
Cries, ah, ha! to the devil:
Like a mad lad,
Pare thy nails, dad;
Adieu, goodman devil.

Newfangle is the 'Vice' of the play; 'Nichol Newfangle, the Vice,' says the list of dramatis personae. We noticed in our consideration of *Hick Scorner* that one of the Vices,

Imagination, was eminent for his more detailed character and readier villany. The trick has been adopted; the favourite has grown fast. He has become *the* Vice. Compared with him the rest of the Vices appear foolish fellows whom it is his delight to plague and lead astray. So supreme is he in wickedness that he has even been given the Devil himself as his godfather, uncle, playmate. It is his duty to keep alive the natural wickedness in man, to set snares and evil mischances before the feet of simpler folk, to teach youth to be idle and young men to be quarrelsome, to lure rogues to their ruin; but, above all, to import wit into prosy dialogues, merriment into dull situations. Such is 'the Vice'. Hear him speak for himself:

What is he calls upon me, and would seem to lack a Vice?
Ere his words be half spoken, I am with him in a trice
Here, there, and everywhere, as the cat is with the mice:
True *Vetus Iniquitas*. Lack'st thou cards, friend, or dice?
I will teach thee to cheat, child, to cog, lie, and swagger,
And ever and anon to be drawing forth thy dagger.
(Ben Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass.*)

Then what a universal favourite, too, is the Devil, our old friend from the Miracles! 'My husband, Timothy Tattle, God rest his poor soul!' says good Gossip Tattle, 'was wont to say, there was no play without a fool and a devil in't; he was for the devil still, God bless him! The devil for his money, would he say, I would fain see the devil.' And Gossip Mirth adds a description of the Devil as she knew him: 'As fine a gentleman of his inches as ever I saw trusted to the stage, or any where else; and loved the commonwealth as well as ever a patriot of them all; he would carry away the Vice on his back, quick to hell, in every play where he came, and

reform abuses' (Ben Jonson's *The Staple of News*). But our present purpose is with Nichol Newfangle and his arch-prompter. Nevertheless these few general remarks will save us from the necessity of returning to the subject later. The truth of the matter is that here, in *Like Will to Like*, we have as full a delineation of these two popular characters as may be found in any of the Interludes. Our attention will not be misplaced if we pry a little closer into the method of presentation.

The Vice must be merry; that above all. Accordingly the stage-direction at the opening of the play reads thus, 'Here entereth Nichol Newfangle the Vice, laughing, and hath a knave of clubs in his hand which, as soon as he speaketh, he offereth unto one of the men or boys standing by.' He is apparently on familiar terms already with the 'gallery' (or, in the term of that day, 'groundlings'); as intimate as the modern clown with his stage-asides for the exclusive benefit of 'the gods'. When we read the first two lines we perceive the wit of the card trick:

> Ha, ha, ha, ha! now like unto like; it will be none other:
> Stoop, gentle knave, and take up your brother.

We can almost hear the shout of laughter at the expense of the fellow who unwittingly took the card. The audience is with Newfangle at once. He has scored his first point and given a capital send-off to the play by this comically-conceived illustration of the meaning of its strange title. Forthwith he rattles along with a string of patter about himself, who he is, what sciences he learnt in hell before he was born, and so on, until arrested by the abrupt entrance of another person. This newcomer somersaults on to the stage and cuts divers uncouth capers exactly as our 'second clown' does at the pantomime. Newfangle

stares, grimaces, and, turning again to the audience, continues:

Sancte benedicite, whom have we here
Tom Tumbler, or else some dancing bear?
Body of me, it were best go no near:
For ought that I see, it is my godfather Lucifer,
Whose prentice I have been this many a day:
But no more words but mum: you shall hear what he will say.

By the time he has finished speaking the other has unrolled himself and presents a queer figure, clothed in a bearskin and bearing in large print on his chest and back the name Lucifer. He too commences with a laugh or a shout, 'Ho!'. That is the hall-mark of the Devil and the Vice, the herald's blare of trumpets, so to speak, before the speech of His High Mightiness. We have not forgotten that other cry:

> Huff, huff, huff! who sent after me?
> I am Imagination, full of jollity.

It is the same trick; the older rascal is, bone, flesh, and blood, the very kin of Newfangle; both have the same godfather. So the dialogue opens between Old Nick and Nichol in the approved fashion:

Lucifer. Ho! mine own boy, I am glad that thou art here!
Newfangle (*pointing to one standing by*). He speaketh to you, sir, I pray you come near.
Lucifer. Nay, thou art even he, of whom I am well apaid.
Newfangle. Then speak aloof, for to come nigh I am afraid.

We need not trouble ourselves here with their further conversation, nor yet with Tom Collier of Croydon, who

joins them in a jig and a song. He soon goes off again, followed by Lucifer, so we can turn over the pages, guided by our outline, until we are near the end.

[*The* DEVIL *entereth.*]

Lucifer. Ho, ho, ho! mine own boy, make no more delay,
But leap up on my back straightway.
Newfangle. Then who shall hold my stirrup, while I go to horse?
Lucifer. Tush, for that do thou not force!
Leap up, I say, leap up quickly.
Newfangle. Woh, Ball, woh! and I will come by and by.
Now for a pair of spurs I would give a good groat,
To try whether this jade do amble or trot.
Farewell, my masters, till I come again,
For now I must make a journey into Spain.
[*He rideth away on the* DEVIL'S *back.*]

The reader must use his imagination, stimulated by recollections of the Christmas pantomime, if this episode is to have its full meaning. Brief in words, it may quite easily have occupied five minutes and more in acting.

As related more or less distantly to the noisy element, the many songs in this Interlude call for notice. The practice of introducing lyrics was in vogue long before the playwrights of Shakespeare's time displayed their use so perfectly. From this point onwards the drama rings with the rough drinking songs, pious hymns, and sweet lyrics of the buffoon, the preacher, and the lover. Thus, turning haphazard to *The Trial of Treasure*, the Interlude immediately preceding *Like Will to Like* in the volume of Dodsley's *Old English Plays*, we find no less than eight songs. *Like Will to Like* has also eight. *New Custom*, the other Interlude in the same volume, has only two; but it may be added that, as the author of *New Custom*

was writing with a very special and sober purpose in view, he may have felt that much singing would be inappropriate. That these lyrics went with a good swing may be judged from two of those in *Like Will to Like*.

(1) Tom Collier of Croydon hath sold his coals,
And made his market to-day;
And now he danceth with the Devil,
For like will to like alway.

Wherefore let us rejoice and sing,
Let us be merry and glad;
Sith that the Collier and the Devil
This match and dance hath made.

Now of this dance we make an end
With mirth and eke with joy:
The Collier and the Devil will be
Much like to like alway.

(2) Troll the bowl and drink to me, and troll the bowl again,
And put a brown toast in [the] pot for Philip Fleming's brain.
And I shall toss it to and fro, even round about the house-a:
Good hostess, now let it be so, I brink them all carouse-a.

More than once reference has been made to the lingering religious element in the Interludes. Probably 'moral element' would describe it better, though in those days religion and morality were perhaps less separable than they are to-day. In the midst of so much comical wickedness and naughty wit, with a decreasing use of the old Morality Virtues, it might be thought that this element would be crowded out. But it was not so. The downfall of the unrighteous was never allowed to pass without the voice of the preacher, frequently the reprobate

himself, pointing the warning to those present. Cuthbert Cutpurse makes a 'godly end' in this fashion:

O, all youth take example by me:
Flee from evil company, as from a serpent you would flee;
For I to you all a mirror may be.
I have been daintily and delicately bred,
But nothing at all in virtuous lore:
And now I am but a man dead;
Hanged I must be, which grieveth me full sore.
Note well the end of me therefore;
And you that fathers and mothers be,
Bring not up your children in too much liberty.

The episode of the crowning of Virtuous Life owes its existence to this same element of moral teaching. Take up what Interlude we will, the preacher is always to be found uttering his short sermon on the folly of sin. Our merry friend, the Vice, usually gets caught in his own toils at last; even if he is spared this defeat, he must ultimately be borne off by the Devil.

But there are lessons to be learnt other than the elementary one that virtue is a wiser guide than vice: many an Interlude was written to castigate a particular form of laxity or drive home a needed reform, in those years when the Stage was the Cinderella of the Church; one at least, *The Four Elements*, was written to disseminate schoolroom learning in an attractive manner. *Nice Wanton* (about 1560) traces the downward career of two spoilt children, paints the remorse of their mother, and sums up its message at the end thus:

Therefore exhort I all parents to be diligent
In bringing up their children; aye, to be circumspect.
Lest they fall to evil, be not negligent
But chastise them before they be sore infect.

The Disobedient Child (printed 1560), of which the title is a sufficient clue to its purpose, permits a boy to refuse to

go to school, and, as a young man, to flout his father's advice in regard to matrimony, only to bring him to the bottom rung of miserable drudgery and servitude under a scolding wife. Of some interest is the lad's report of a schoolboy's life, voicing, as it possibly does, a needed criticism of the excessive severity of sixteenth-century pedagogues. Speaking of the boys he says:

> For as the bruit goeth by many a one,
> Their tender bodies both night and day
> Are whipped and scourged and beat like a stone,
> That from top to toe the skin is away.

A slightly fuller outline of *The Marriage of Wit and Science* (1570 approx.) will show how pleasantly, yet pointedly, the younger generation of that day was taught the necessity of sustained industry if scholarship was to be acquired. It has been suggested, with good reason, that the play was written by a schoolmaster for his pupils' performance. The superior plot-structure, and the rare adoption of subdivision into acts and scenes, indicate an author of some classical knowledge.

Wit, a promising youth, son of Nature, decides to marry Science, the daughter of Reason and Experience. Nature approves of his intention, but warns him that 'travail and time' are the only two by whose help he can win the maid. For his servant and companion, however, she gives him Will, a lively boy, full of sprightly fire. Science is now approached. But it appears that only he who shall slay the giant, Tediousness, may be her husband. To this trial Wit volunteers. He is advised first to undergo long years of training under Instruction, Study, and Diligence; but, soon tiring of them, he rashly goes to the fight, trusting that his own strength, backed by the courage of Will and the half-hearted support of Diligence, will prove sufficient. Too self-confident, he is

overthrown and his companions are put to flight. Will soon returns with Recreation, by whose skill Wit is restored to vigour and better resolution. Nevertheless, directly afterwards, he accepts the gentle ministrations of the false jade, Idleness, who sings him to sleep and then transforms him into the appearance of Ignorance. In this plight he is found by his lady-love and her parents, who do not at first recognize him. Shame is called in to doctor him. On his recovery he returns very repentantly to the tuition of his three teachers, until, by their help and Will's, he is able to slay the giant. As his reward he marries Science.

As one of several good things in this pleasant Interlude may be quoted Will's speech on life before and after marriage, from the point of view of a favoured servant:

I am not disposed as yet to be tame,
And therefore I am loth to be under a dame.
Now you are a bachelor, a man may soon win you,
Methinks there is some good fellowship in you;
We may laugh and be merry at board and at bed,
You are not so testy as those that be wed.
Mild in behaviour and loth to fall out,
You may run, you may ride and rove round about,
With wealth at your will and all thing at ease,
Free, frank and lusty, easy to please.
But when you be clogged and tied by the toe
So fast that you shall not have pow'r to let go,
You will tell me another lesson soon after,
And cry *peccavi* too, except your luck be the better.
Then farewell good fellowship! then come at a call!
Then wait at an inch, you idle knaves all!
Then sparing and pinching, and nothing of gift,
No talk with our master, but all for his thrift.
Solemn and sour, and angry as a wasp,
All things must be kept under lock and hasp;
All that which will make me to fare full ill.
All your care shall be to hamper poor Will.

The liberty and, we may infer, good hearing extended to these unblushingly didactic Interludes attracted into authorship writers with purposes more aggressive and debatable than those pertaining to wise conduct. Zealous reformers, earnest proselytizers, fierce dogmatists turned to the drama as a medium through which they might effectively reach the ears and hearts of the people. Kirchmayer's *Pammachius*, translated into English by Bale (author of *King John*), contained an attack on the Pope as Antichrist. In 1527 the boys of St. Paul's acted a play (now unknown) in which Luther figured ignominiously. Here then were Roman Catholics and Protestants extending their furious battleground to the stage. This style of thing came to such a pitch that it was actually judged necessary to forbid it by law. Similar plays, however, still continued to be produced; and even King Edward VI is credited with the authorship of a strongly Protestant comedy entitled *De Meretrice Babylonica*.

A very fair example of these political and controversial Interludes is *New Custom*, printed in 1573, and possibly written only a year or two before that date. Here, for instance, are a few of the players' names and descriptions as given at the beginning: Perverse Doctrine, an old Popish Priest; Ignorance, another, but elder; New Custom, a Minister; Light of the Gospel, a Minister; Hypocrisy, an old Woman. Then, as to the matter, here is an extract from Perverse Doctrine's opening speech, the writer's intention being to expose the speaker to the derision of his enlightened hearers.

What! young men to be meddlers in divinity? it is
a goodly sight!
Yet therein now almost is every boy's delight;
No book now in their hands, but all scripture, scripture,
Either the whole Bible or the New Testament, you may
be sure.

The New Testament for them! and then too for Coll,
my dog.
This is the old proverb—to cast pearls to an hog.
Give them that which is meet for them, a racket and
a ball,
Or some other trifle to busy their heads withal,
Playing at quoits or nine-holes, or shooting at butts:
There let them be, a God's name.

Or here again is a bold declaration from New Custom, the Reformation minister:

I said that the mass, and such trumpery as that,
Popery, purgatory, pardons, were flat
Against God's word and primitive constitution,
Crept in through covetousness and superstition
Of late years, through blindness, and men of no know-
ledge,
Even such as have been in every age.

It is with some surprise certainly that we find King John of England glorified, for purposes of Protestant propaganda, as a sincere and godly 'protestant'. So it is, however. In his play, *King John* (about 1548), Bishop Bale depicts that monarch as an inspired hater of papistical tyranny and an ardent lover of his country, in whose cause he suffered death by poisoning at the hands of a monk. Stephen Langton, the Pope and Cardinal Pandulph figure as Sedition, Usurped Power and Private Wealth. A summary of the play, provided by an Interpreter, supplies us with the following explanation of John's quarrel with Rome.

This noble King John, as a faithful Moses,
Withstood proud Pharaoh for his poor Israel,
Minding to bring it out of the land of darkness;
But the Egyptians did against him so rebel,
That his poor people did still in the desert dwell,
Till that duke Joshua, which was our late King Henry,
Closely brought us into the land of milk and honey.

As a strong David, at the voice of verity,
Great Goliah, the pope, he struck down with his sling,
Restoring again to a Christian liberty
His land and people, like a most victorious king;
To his first beauty intending the Church to bring
From ceremonies dead to the living word of the Lord.
This the second act will plenteously record.

As put into the mouth of the king himself, these other lines are hard to beat for deliberate partisan misrepresentation. The king feels himself about to die.

I have sore hungered and thirsted righteousness
For the office sake that God hath me appointed,
But now I perceive that sin and wickedness
In this wretched world, like as Christ prophesied,
Have the overhand: in me it is verified.
Pray for me, good people, I beseech you heartily,
That the Lord above on my poor soul have mercy.
Farewell noblemen, with the clergy spiritual,
Farewell men of law, with the whole commonalty.
Your disobedience I do forgive you all,
And desire God to pardon your iniquity.
Farewell, sweet England, now last of all to thee:
I am right sorry I could do for thee no more.
Farewell once again, yea, farewell for evermore.

Prompted by a different motive, yet not far removed in actual effect from the politico-religious class of play represented by *New Custom*, are the early Interludes of John Heywood. It is quite impossible to read such a play as *The Pardoner and the Friar* and believe that its author wrote under any such earnest and sober inspiration as did the author of *New Custom*. His intention was frankly to amuse, and to paint life as he saw it without the intrusion of unreal personages of highly virtuous but dull ideas. Yet he swung the lash of satire as cuttingly and as merrily about the flanks of ecclesiasti-

cal superstition as ever did the creator of Perverse Doctrine.[1]

The simplest plot sufficed Heywood, and the minimum of characters. *The Pardoner and the Friar* (possibly as early as 1520) demands only four persons, while the plot may be summed up in a few sentences, thus: A Pardoner and a Friar, from closely adjoining platforms, are endeavouring to address the same crowd, the one to sell relics, the other to beg money for his order. By a sort of stichomythic alternation each for a time is supposed to carry on his speech regardless of the other, so that to follow either connectedly the alternate lines must be read in sequence. But every now and then they break off for abuse, and finally they fight. A Parson and neighbour Prat interfere to convey them to jail for the disturbance, but are themselves badly mauled. Then the Pardoner and the Friar go off amicably together. There is no allegory, no moral; merely satire on the fraudulent and hypocritical practices of pardoners and friars, together with some horseplay to raise a louder laugh. The fashion of that satire may be judged from the following exchange of home truths by the rival orators.

Friar. What, should ye give ought to parting pardoners?—
Pardoner. What, should ye spend on these flattering liars,—
Friar. What, should ye give ought to these bold beggars?—
Pardoner. As be these babbling monks and these friars,—

[1] The reader is warned against chronological confusion. In order to follow out the various dramatic contributions of the Interludes one must sometimes pass over plays at one point to return to them at another. Care has been taken to place approximate dates against the plays, and these should be duly regarded. The treatment of so early an Interlude writer as Heywood (his three best known productions may be dated between 1520 and 1540) thus late is justified by the fact that he is in some ways 'before his time', notably in his rejection of the Morality abstractions.

Friar. Let them hardly labour for their living;—
Pardoner. Which do nought daily but babble and lie—
Friar. It much hurteth them good men's giving,—
Pardoner. And tell you fables dear enough at a fly,—
Friar. For that maketh them idle and slothful to wark,—
Pardoner. As doth this babbling friar here to-day?—
Friar. That for none other thing they will cark.—
Pardoner. Drive him hence, therefore, in the twenty-devil way!—

The Four P.P. (?1540), similarly, requires no more than a palmer, a pardoner, a 'pothecary and a pedlar, and for plot only a single conversation, devoid even of the rough play which usually enlivened discussions on the stage. In the debate arises a contest as to who can tell the biggest lie—won by the palmer's statement that he has never seen a woman out of patience—and that is the sole dramatic element. Nevertheless, by sheer wit interest is maintained to the end, every one smiling over the rival claims of such veteran humbugs as the old-time pardoner and apothecary; scant reverence does 'Pothecary vouchsafe to Pardoner's potent relics, his 'of All Hallows the blessed jaw-bone', his 'great toe of the Trinity', his 'buttock-bone of Pentecost', and the rest. One of the raciest passages occurs in the Pardoner's relation of the wonders he has performed in the execution of his office. Amongst other deeds of note is the bringing back of a certain woman from hell to earth. For this purpose the Pardoner visited the lower regions in person—so he says—and brought her out in triumph with the full and joyful consent of Lucifer.

[*The* PARDONER *has entered hell and secured a guide.*]
Pardoner. This devil and I walked arm in arm
So far, till he had brought me thither,
Where all the devils of hell together
Stood in array in such apparel
As for that day there meetly fell.

Their horns well-gilt, their claws full clean,
Their tails well-kempt, and, as I ween,
With sothery[1] butter their bodies anointed;
I never saw devils so well appointed.
The master-devil sat in his jacket,
And all the souls were playing at racket.
None other rackets they had in hand,
Save every soul a good firebrand,
Wherewith they played so prettily
That Lucifer laughed merrily,
And all the residue of the fiends
Did laugh thereat full well like friends.

[*He interviews* Lucifer *and asks if he may take away* Margery Corson.]

Now, by our honour, said Lucifer,
No devil in hell shall withhold her;
And if thou wouldest have twenty mo,
Wert not for justice, they should go.
For all we devils within this den
Have more to-do with two women
Than with all the charge we have beside;
Wherefore, if thou our friend will be tried,
Apply thy pardons to women so
That unto us there come no mo.

Johan Johan, or, at greater length, *The Merry Play between Johan Johan the Husband, Tyb his Wife, and Sir Jhon the Priest* (printed 1533), contains only the three characters mentioned, but possesses a theme more nearly deserving the name of plot than do the other two, namely, the contriving and carrying out of a plan by Tyb for exposing her boastful husband's real and absolute subjection to her rule. Yet, even so, it is extremely simple. Johan Johan is first heard alone, declaring how he will beat his wife for not being at home. The tuggings of fear and valour in his heart, however, give his monologue

[1] sweet.

an argumentative form, in which first one motive and then the other gains the upper hand, very similar to the conflict between Launcelot Gobbo's conscience and the Devil. He closes in favour of the beating and then—Tyb comes home. Oh the difference! Johan Johan suspects his wife of undue friendliness with Sir Jhon the Priest, but he dare not say so. Tyb guesses his doubts, and in her turn suspects that he is inclined to rebel. So she makes the yoke heavier. Johan Johan has to invite Sir Jhon to eat a most desirable pie with them; but throughout the meal, with jealousy at his heart and the still greater pangs of unsatisfied hunger a little lower, he is kept busy by his wife, trying to mend a leaky bucket with wax. Surely never did a scene contain more 'asides' than are uttered and explained away by the crushed husband! Finally overtaxed endurance asserts itself, and wife and priest are driven out of doors; but the play closes with a very pronounced note of uncertainty from the victor as to what new game the vanquished may shortly be at if he be not there to see.

The all-important feature to be noticed in Heywood's work is that here we have the drama escaping from its alliance with religion into the region of pure comedy. Here is no well planned moral, no sententious mouthpiece of abstract excellence, no ruin of sinners and crowning of saints. Here, too, is no Vice, no Devil, although they are the chief media for comedy in other Interludes, nor is there any buffoonery; even of its near cousins, scuffling and fighting, only one of the three plays has more than a trace. Hence the earlier remark, that Heywood was before his time. It is not devils in bearskins and wooden-sworded vices that create true comedy; they belong to the realm of farce. Yet they continued to flourish long after Heywood had set another example, and with them

the cuffing of ears and drunken gambolling which we may see, in the works of other men, trying to rescue prosy scenes from dullness. In *Johan Johan* is simple comedy, the comedy of laughter-raising dialogue and 'asides'. We do not say it is perfect comedy, far from it; but it is comedy cleared of its former alloys. It is the comedy which Shakespeare refined for his own use in *Twelfth Night* and elsewhere.

CHAPTER IV

RISE OF COMEDY AND TRAGEDY

No great discernment is required to see that, after the appearance of *Johan Johan,* all that was needed for the complete development of comedy was the invention of a well-contrived plot. For reasons already indicated, Interludes were naturally deficient in this respect. Nor were the Moralities and Bible Miracles much better: their length and comprehensive themes were against them. There were the Saint Plays, of which some still lingered upon the stage; these offered greater possibilities. But here, again, originality was limited; the *dénouement* was more or less a foregone conclusion. Clearly, one of two things was wanted: either a man of genius to perceive the need and to supply it, or the study of new models outside the field of English drama. The man of genius was not then forthcoming, but by good fortune the models were stumbled upon.

We say stumbled upon, because the absence of tentative predecessors and of anything approaching an eager band of successors, suggests an unpreparedness for the discovery when it came. Thus *Calisto and Melibaea* (1530), an imitation of a Spanish comedy of the same name, though it contained a definitely evolved plot, sent barely a ripple over the surface of succeeding authorship. It represents the steadfastness of the maiden Melibaea against the entreaties of her lover Calisto and the much more crafty, indeed almost successful, wiles of the procuress, Celestine. True, the play is dull enough. But if dramatists had

been awake to their defects, the value of the new importation from a foreign literature would have been noticed. The years passed, however, without producing imitators, until some time in the years between 1544 and 1551 a Latin scholar, reading the plays of Plautus, decided to write a comedy like them. Latin Comedies, both in the original tongue and in translation, had appeared in England in previous years, but only as strayed foreigners. Nicholas Udall, the head master of Eton School, proposed a very different thing, namely, an English comedy which should rival in technique the comedies of the Latins. The result was *Ralph Roister Doister*. He called it an Interlude. Posterity has given it the title of 'the first regular English comedy'.

Divided into five acts, with subordinate scenes, this play develops its story with deliberate calculated steps. Acts I and II are occupied by Ralph's vain attempts to soften the heart of Dame Christian Custance by gifts and messages. In Act III come complications, double-dealings. Matthew Merrygreek plays Ralph false, tortures his love, misreads—by the simple trick of mispunctuation—his letter to the Dame, and thus, under a mask of friendship, sets him further than ever from success. Still deeper complexities appear with Act IV, for now arrives, with greetings from Gawin Goodluck, long betrothed to Dame Custance, a certain sea-captain, who, misled by Ralph's confident assurance, misunderstands the relations between the Dame and him, suspects disloyalty, and changes from friendliness to cold aloofness. This, by vexing the lady, brings disaster upon Ralph, whose bold attempt, on the suggestion of Merrygreek, to carry his love off by force is repulsed by that Dame's Amazonian band of maid-servants with scuttles and brooms. In this extraordinary conflict Ralph is horribly belaboured by the malicious Matthew

under pretence of blows aimed at Dame Custance. Act V, however, brings Goodluck himself and explanations. That worthy man finds his lady true, friendship is established all round, and Ralph and Merrygreek join the happy couple in a closing feast.

This bald outline perhaps makes sufficiently clear the great advance in plot structure. Within the play, however, are many other good things. The character of Ralph Roister Doister, 'a vain-glorious, cowardly blockhead', as the list of dramatis personae has it, is thoroughly well done: his heavy love-sighs, his confident elation, his distrust, his gullibility, his ups and downs and contradictions, are all in the best comic vein. Only second in fullness of portraiture, and truer to Nature, is Dame Custance, who—if we exclude Melibaea as not native to English shores—may be said to bring into English secular drama honourable womanhood. Her amused indifference at first, her sharp reproof of her maids who have allowed themselves to act as Ralph's messengers, her gathering vexation at Ralph's tiresome wooing, her genuine alarm when she sees that his boastful words are accepted by the sea-captain as truth—these are sentiments and emotions copied from a healthy and worthy model. Matthew Merrygreek, an unmistakable 'Vice' ever at Ralph's elbow, is of all Vices the shrewdest striker of laughter out of a block of stupidity: it is from his ingenious brain that almost every absurd scene is evolved for the ridiculing of Ralph. Thoroughly human, and quite assertive, are the lower characters, the maid-servants and men-servants, Madge Mumblecrust, Tibet Talkapace, Truepenny, Dobinet Doughty and the rest. Need it be added that the battle in Act IV is pure fooling? or that jolly songs enliven the scenes with their rousing choruses (e.g. 'I mun be married a Sunday')? *Ralph Roister Doister* is

an English comedy with English notions of the best way of amusing English folk of the sixteenth century. With all its improvements it has no suggestion of the alien about it, as has the classically-flavoured *Thersites* (also based, like Udall's play, on Plautus's *Miles Gloriosus*), or *Calisto and Melibaea* with its un-English names. Perhaps that is why it had to wait fifteen years for a successor. Quite possibly its spectators regarded it as merely a better Interlude than usual, without recognizing the precise qualities which made it different from *Johan Johan*.

Two quotations will be sufficient to illustrate the opposing characters.

(1)

Merrygreek (*alone*). But now of Roister Doister somewhat to express,
That ye may esteem him after his worthiness,
In these twenty towns, and seek them throughout,
Is not the like stock whereon to graff a lout.
All the day long is he facing and craking[1]
Of his great acts in fighting and fray-making;
But when Roister Doister is put to his proof,
To keep the Queen's peace is more for his behoof.
If any woman smile, or cast on him an eye,
Up is he to the hard ears in love by and by:
And in all the hot haste must she be his wife,
Else farewell his good days, and farewell his life!

(2)

[TRISTRAM TRUSTY, *a good friend and counsellor to* DAME CUSTANCE, *is consulted by her on the matter of the sea-captain's* (SURESBY'S) *misunderstanding of her attitude towards* RALPH ROISTER DOISTER.]

T. Trusty. Nay, weep not, woman, but tell me what your cause is.
As concerning my friend is anything amiss?

C. Custance. No, not on my part; but here was Sim. Suresby—

[1] boasting.

T. Trusty. He was with me, and told me so.
C. Custance. And he stood by
While Ralph Roister Doister, with help of Merry-greek,
For promise of marriage did unto me seek.
T. Trusty. And had ye made any promise before them twain?
C. Custance. No, I had rather be torn in pieces and slain.
No man hath my faith and troth but Gawin Goodluck,
And that before Suresby did I say, and there stuck;
But of certain letters there were such words spoken—
T. Trusty. He told me that too.
C. Custance. And of a ring and token,
That Suresby, I spied, did more than half suspect
That I my faith to Gawin Goodluck did reject.
T. Trusty. But was there no such matter, Dame Custance, indeed?
C. Custance. If ever my head thought it, God send me ill speed!
Wherefore I beseech you with me to be a witness
That in all my life I never intended thing less.
And what a brainsick fool Ralph Roister Doister is
Yourself knows well enough.
T. Trusty. Ye say full true, i-wis.

In 1566 was acted at Christ's College, Cambridge, 'A Ryght Pithy, Pleasaunt, and merie Comedie, intytuled *Gammer Gurton's Needle.*' The authorship is uncertain, recent investigation having exalted a certain Stevenson into rivalry with the Bishop Still to whom former scholars were content to assign it. Possibly as the result of a perusal of Plautus, possibly under the influence of the last play—for in subject matter it is even more perfectly English than *Ralph Roister Doister*—this comedy is also built on a well-arranged plan, the plot developing regularly through five acts with subsidiary scenes. Let us glance through it.

Gammer Gurton and her goodman Hodge lose their one and only needle, an article not easily renewed, nor easily done without, seeing that Hodge's garments stand in need of instant repair. Gib, the cat, is strongly suspected of having swallowed it. Into this confusion steps Diccon, a bedlam beggar, whose quick eye promptly detects opportunities for mischief. After scaring Hodge with offers of magic art, he goes to Dame Chat, an honest but somewhat jealous neighbour, unaware of what has happened, with a tale that Gammer Gurton accuses her of stealing her best cock. To Gammer Gurton he announces that he has seen Dame Chat pick up the needle and make off with it. Between the two dames ensues a meeting, the nature of which may be guessed, the whole trouble lying in the fact that neither thinks it necessary to name the article under dispute. No wonder that discussion under the disadvantage of so great a misunderstanding ends in violence. Doctor Rat, the curate, is now called in; but again Diccon is equal to the occasion. Having warned Dame Chat that Hodge, to balance the matter of the cock, is about to creep in through a breach in the wall and kill her chickens, he persuades Doctor Rat that if he will creep through this same opening he will see the needle lying on Dame Chat's table. The consequences for the curate are severe. Master Bailey's assistance is next requisitioned, and him friend Diccon cannot overreach. The whole truth coming out, Diccon is required to kneel and apologize. In doing so he gives Hodge a slap which elicits from that worthy a yell of pain. But it is a wholesome pang, for it finds the needle no further away than in the seat of Hodge's breeches.

If we compare this play with *Ralph Roister Doister* three ideas will occur: first, that we have made no advance; second, that, in giving the preference to rough country

folk, the author has deliberately abandoned the higher standard of refinement in language and action set in Udall's major scenes; third, that whereas the earlier work bases its comedy on character, educing the amusing scenes from the clash of vanity, constancy and mischief, the later play relies for its comic effects on situations brought about by mischief alone. These are three rather heavy counts against the younger rival. But in the other scale may be placed a very fair claim to greater naturalness. Taking the scenes and characters in turn, mischief-maker, churchman and all, there is none so open to the charge of being impossible, and therefore farcical, as the battle between the forces of Ralph and Dame Custance, or the incredibly self-deceived Ralph himself. In accompanying Ralph through his adventures we seem to be moving through a fantastic world in which Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Malvolio might feel at home; but with Dame Chat, Gammer Gurton and Hodge we feel the solid earth beneath our feet and around us the strong air which nourished the peasantry and yeomen of Tudor England.

The first extract is a verse from this comedy's one and famous song; the second is taken from Act I, Scene 4.

(1)

I cannot eat but little meat,
My stomach is not good;
But sure I think that I can drink
With him that wears a hood.
Though I go bare, take ye no care,
I am nothing a-cold;
I stuff my skin so full within
Of jolly good ale and old.
Back and side go bare, go bare,
Both foot and hand go cold:
But belly, God send thee good ale enough,
Whether it be new or old.

(2)

[HODGE *hears of the loss of the needle on his return home from the fields.*]

Hodge. Your nee'le lost? it is pity you should lack care and endless sorrow.
Gog's death, how shall my breeches be sewed? Shall I go thus to-morrow?

Gammer. Ah, Hodge, Hodge, if that ich could find my nee'le, by the reed,
Ch'ould sew thy breeches, ich promise thee, with full good double thread,
And set a patch on either knee should last this moneths twain.
Now God and good Saint Sithe, I pray to send it home again.

Hodge. Whereto served your hands and eyes, but this your nee'le to keep?
What devil had you else to do? ye keep, ich wot, no sheep.
Cham[1] fain abroad to dig and delve, in water, mire and clay,
Sossing and possing in the dirt still from day to day.
A hundred things that be abroad cham set to see them well:
And four of you sit idle at home and cannot keep a nee'le!

Gammer. My nee'le, alas, ich lost it, Hodge, what time ich me up hasted
To save milk set up for thee, which Gib our cat hath wasted.

Hodge. The devil he burst both Gib and Tib, with all the rest;
Cham always sure of the worst end, whoever have the best.
Where ha' you been fidging abroad, since you your nee'le lost?

Gammer. Within the house, and at the door, sitting by this same post;

[1] I am.

Where I was looking a long hour, before these folks came here.
But, wellaway! all was in vain; my nee'le is never the near.

Hodge. Set me a candle, let me seek, and grope wherever it be.
Gog's heart, ye be foolish (ich think), you know it not when you it see.

Gammer. Come hither, Cock: what, Cock, I say!

Cock. How, Gammer?

Gammer. Go, hie thee soon, and grope behind the old brass pan,
Which thing when thou hast done,
There shalt thou find an old shoe, wherein, if thou look well,
Thou shalt find lying an inch of white tallow candle:
Light it, and bring it tite away.

Cock. That shall be done anon.

Gammer. Nay, tarry, Hodge, till thou hast light, and then we'll seek each one.

Ralph Roister Doister and *Gammer Gurton's Needle* mark the end of the Interlude stage and the commencement of Comedy proper. Leaving the latter at this point for the present, we shall return in the next chapter to study its fortunes at the hands of Lyly.

Morality Plays, though theoretically quite as suitable for tragic effect as for comic, since the former only required that Mankind should sometimes fail to reach heaven, seem nevertheless to have developed mainly the lighter side, setting the hero right at the finish and in the meantime discovering, to the relief of otherwise bored spectators, that wickedness, in some unexplained way, was funny. As long as propriety forbade that good should be overcome by evil it is hard to see how tragedy could appear. Had Humankind, in *The Castell of Perseverance*, been fought for in vain by the Virtues, or had Everyman found no companion to go with him and intercede for him.

there had been tragedy indeed. But religious optimism was against any conclusion so discouraging to repentance. The lingering Miracles, it is true, still presented the sublimest of all tragedies in the Fall of Man and the apparent triumph of the Pharisees over Jesus. Between them, however, and the kind of drama that succeeded the Moralities, too great a gulf was fixed. Contemporaries of those original spirits, Heywood and Udall, could hardly revert for inspiration to the discredited performances of villages and of a few provincial towns. Tragedy had to wait until there was matured and made popular an Interlude from which the conflict of Virtues and Vices, with the orthodox triumph of the former, had been purged away, leaving to the author complete liberty alike in character and action. When that came, Tragedy returned to the stage, a stranger with strange stories to tell. Persia and Ancient Rome sent their tyrants and their heroines to contest for public favour with home-born knaves and fools. Nor were the newcomers above borrowing the services of those same knaves and fools. The Vice was given a place, low clownish fellows were admitted to relieve the harrowed feelings, and our old acquaintance, Herod, was summoned from the Miracles to lend his aid.

Yet even so—and probably because it was so—Tragedy was ill at ease. She had called in low comedy and rant to please the foolish, only to find herself infected and degraded by their company. Moreover, the bustle of incident, the abrupt changes from grave to gay and to grave again, jangled her sad majestic harmonies with shrill interrupting discords. It had not been so in Greece. It had not been so even in Italy, where Roman Seneca, fearing the least decline to a lower plane of dignity and impressiveness, had disciplined tragedy by an imposition of artificial but not unskilful restraints. In place of the

strong unbroken sweep of a resistless current, which characterized the evolution of an Aeschylean drama, he had insisted on an orderly division of a plot into acts and scenes, as though one should break up the sheer plunge of a single waterfall into a well-balanced group of cascades. Yet he was wise in his generation, securing by this means a carefully proportioned development which, in the absence of that genius which inspired the Greek dramatists, might otherwise have been lost. Once strong and free in the plays of Aeschylus and his compeers, hampered and constantly under guidance but still dignified and noble in the Senecan drama, Tragedy now found herself debased and almost caricatured in the English Interlude stage. Fortunately the danger was seen in time. English writers, face to face with self-conscious tragedy, realized that here at least was more than unaided native art could compass. Despairing of success if they persisted in the old methods, they fell back awkwardly upon classical imitation and, by assiduous study tempered by a wise criticism, achieved success.

Only two plays with any claim to the designation of tragedies have survived to us from the Interludes, neither of them of much interest. *Cambyses* (1561), by Thomas Preston, has all the qualities of an imperfect Interlude. There are the base fellows and the clowns, Huff, Ruff, Snuff, Hob and Lob; the abstractions, Diligence, Shame, Common's Complaint, Small Hability, and the like; the Vice, Ambidexter, who enters 'with an old capcase on his head, an old pail about his hips for harness, a scummer and a potlid by his side, and a rake on his shoulder'; and the same scuffling and horseplay when the comic element is uppermost. Incident follows incident as rapidly and with as trifling motives as before. In the course of a short play we see Cambyses, king of Persia, set off for his

conquests in Egypt; return; execute Sisamnes, his unjust deputy; prove a far worse ruler himself; shoot through the heart the young son of Praxaspes, to prove to that too-frank counsellor that he is not as drunk as was supposed; murder his own brother, Smirdis, on the lying report of Ambidexter; marry, contrary to the law of the Church and her own wish, a lovely lady, his cousin, and then have her executed for reproaching him with the death of his brother; and finally die, accidentally pierced by his own sword when mounting a horse. All these horrors, except the death of the lady, take place on the stage. Thus we have such stage-directions as, 'Smite him in the neck with a sword to signify his death', 'Flay him with a false skin', 'A little bladder of vinegar pricked', 'Enter the King without a gown, a sword thrust up into his side, bleeding.' Of real tragedy there is little, the hustle of crime upon crime obliterating the impression which any one singly might produce. Yet even in this crude orgy of bloodshed the melancholy voice of unaffected pathos can be heard mourning the loss of dear ones. It speaks in the farewells of Sisamnes and his son Otian, and of Praxaspes (the honest minister) and his little boy; throughout the whole incident of the gentle lady whose fate melts even the Vice to tears; and in the outburst of a mother's grief over her child's corpse. We quote the last.

O blissful babe, O joy of womb, heart's comfort and delight,
For counsel given unto the king, is this thy just requite?
O heavy day and doleful time, these mourning tunes to make!
With blubb'red eyes into my arms from earth I will thee take,
And wrap thee in my apron white: but O my heavy heart!
The spiteful pangs that it sustains would make it in two to part,

The death of this my son to see: O heavy mother now,
That from thy sweet and sug'red joy to sorrow so shouldst bow!
What grief in womb did I retain before I did thee see;
Yet at the last, when smart was gone, what joy wert thou to me!
How tender was I of thy food, for to preserve thy state!
How stilled I thy tender heart at times early and late!
With velvet paps I gave thee suck, with issue from my breast,
And danced thee upon my knee to bring thee unto rest.
Is this the joy of thee I reap? O king of tiger's brood,
O tiger's whelp, hadst thou the heart to see this child's heart-blood?
Nature enforceth me, alas, in this wise to deplore,
To wring my hands, O wel-away, that I should see this hour.
Thy mother yet will kiss thy lips, silk-soft and pleasant white,
With wringing hands lamenting for to see thee in this plight.
My lording dear, let us go home, our mourning to augment.

The second play, *Appius and Virginia* (1563), by R. B. (not further identified), is, in some respects, weaker; though, by avoiding the crowded plot which spoilt *Cambyses*, it attains more nearly to tragedy. The low characters, Mansipulus and Mansipula, the Vice (Haphazard), and the abstractions, Conscience, Comfort and their brethren, reappear with as little success. But the singleness of the theme helps towards that elevation of the main figures and intensifying of the catastrophe which tragic emotion demands. Unfortunately, from the start the author seems to have been obsessed with the notion that the familiar rant of Herod was peculiarly suited to his subject. In such a notion there lay, of course, the half-truth that lofty thoughts and impassioned speech are more befitting the sombre muse than the foolish

chatter of clowns. But, except where his own deliberately introduced mirth-makers are speaking, he will have nothing but pompous rhetoric from the lips of his characters. His prologue begins his speech with the sounding line:

Who doth desire the trump of fame to sound unto the skies—

Virginius's wife makes her début upon the stage with this encouraging remark to her companion:

The pert and prickly prime of youth ought chastisement to have,
But thou, dear daughter, needest not, thyself doth show thee grave.

To which Virginia most becomingly answers:

Refell your mind of mournful plaints, dear mother, rest your mind.

After this every one feels that the wicked judge, Appius, has done no more than his duty when he exclaims, at his entrance:

The furrowed face of fortune's force my pinching pain doth move.

Virginius slays his daughter on the stage and serves her head up in a charger before Appius, who promptly bursts into a cataclysm of C's ('O curst and cruel cankered churl, O carl unnatural'); but there is not a suggestion of the pathos noticed in *Cambyses*. Instead there is in one place a sort of frantic agitation, which the author doubtless thought was the pure voice of tragic sorrow. It is in the terrible moment when, after the heroic strain of the sacrifice is over, Virginius realizes the meaning of what he has done. Presumably wild with grief, he raves in

language so startlingly akin to the ludicrous despairs of Pyramus and Thisbe that the modern reader, acquainted with the latter, is almost jarred into laughter.

O cruel hands, O bloody knife, O man, what hast thou done?
Thy daughter dear and only heir her vital end hath won.
Come, fatal blade, make like despatch: come, Atropos: come, aid!
Strike home, thou careless arm, with speed; of death be not afraid.

Of such eloquence we might truly say with Theseus, 'This passion, and the death of a dear friend, would go near to make a man look sad.'

In 1562 Tragedy, as we have said, took refuge in an imitation of the Senecan stage: translations of Seneca's tragedies had begun to appear in 1559. *The Tragedy of Ferrex and Porrex*, or *Gorboduc*, as it was originally and is now most commonly named, marks a new departure for English drama. To understand this we ought perhaps to say something about the essential features of a Greek tragedy (Seneca's own model), and make a note of any special Senecan additions. What strikes one most in reading a play of Aeschylus is the prominence given to a composite and almost colourless character known as the Chorus (for though it consists of a body of persons, it speaks, for the most part, as one), the absence of any effective action from the stage, the limited number of actors, and the tendency of any speaker to expand his remarks into a set speech of considerable length. This tendency, especially noticeable in the Chorus, whose speeches commonly take the form of chants, encouraged the faculty of generalizing philosophically, so that one is constantly treated to general reflections expressive rather of broad wisdom and piety than of feelings

directly and dramatically aroused; much also is made of retrospection and relation, whether the topic is ancient history, the events of a recent voyage, or a barely completed crime. The sage backward glance of the Chorus is quick to discover in present ruin a punishment for past crime; so that the plot becomes in a manner a picture of the resistless laws of moral justice. Speeches, a moralizing Chorus, actions not performed but reported in detail, a sense of divine retribution for sin, these are perhaps the qualities which, apart from the poetry itself, we recall most readily as typical of a Greek tragedy. These Seneca modified by the introduction of acts and scenes, a subordination of the Chorus, and an exaggerated predilection for long sententious speeches; he also added a new stage character known as the Ghost. Seneca's elevation, to the dogmatic position of laws, of the unities of Time, Place and Action, rules by no means invariable among his older and greater masters, has been the subject of much debate, but, on the whole, the verdict has been hostile. According to these unities, the time represented in the play should not greatly exceed the time occupied in acting it, the scene of the action should not vary, and the plot should be concerned only with one event. This last law was generally accepted, by Elizabethans, in Tragedy at least. The other two, though much insisted on by English theorists, such as Sir Philip Sidney, met with so much neglect in practice that we need devote no space to the discussion of them.

Having thus hastily summarized the larger superficial characteristics of classical drama, we may return to *Gorboduc* and inquire which of these were adopted in it and with what modifications. We find it divided into five acts and nine scenes. A Chorus, though it takes no other part, sings its moralizing lyrics at the end of each

act except the last. 3 Speeches of inordinate length are made—three consecutive speeches in Act I, Scene 2, occupy two hundred and sixty lines—the subject-matter being commonly argumentative. 4 Only through the reports of messengers and eye-witnesses do we learn of the cold-blooded murder and many violent deaths that take place. 5 Everywhere hurried action and unreasoning instinct give place to deliberation and debate. 6 Between this play and its predecessors no change can be more sweeping or more abrupt. In an instant, as it were, we pass from the unpolished *Cambyses*, savage and reeking with blood, to the equally violent events of *Gorboduc*, cold beneath a formal restraint which, regulating their setting in the general framework, robs them of more than half their force. Had this severe discipline of the emotions been accepted as for ever binding upon the tragic stage Elizabethan drama would have been forgotten. The truth is that the germ of dissension was sown in *Gorboduc* itself. Conscious that the banishment of action from the stage, while natural enough in Greece, must meet with an overwhelming resistance from the popular custom in England, the authors, Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, invented a compromise. Before each act they provided a symbolical Dumb Show which, by its external position, infringed no classical law, yet satisfied the demand of an English audience for real deeds and melodramatic spectacles. It was an ingenious idea, the effect of which was to keep intact the close link between stage and action until the native genius should be strong enough to cast aside its swaddling clothes and follow its own bent without hurt. As illustrating this innovation—the reader will not have forgotten that both Dumb Show and Chorus are to be found in *Pericles*—we may quote the directions for the Dumb Show before the second act.

First, the music of cornets began to play, during which came in upon the stage a king accompanied with a number of his nobility and gentlemen. And after he had placed himself in a chair of estate prepared for him, there came and kneeled before him a grave and aged gentleman, and offered up unto him a cup of wine in a glass, which the king refused. After him comes a brave and lusty young gentleman, and presents the king with a cup of gold filled with poison, which the king accepted, and drinking the same, immediately fell down dead upon the stage, and so was carried thence away by his lords and gentlemen, and then the music ceased. Hereby was signified, that as glass by nature holdeth no poison, but is clear and may easily be seen through, ne boweth by any art; so a faithful counsellor holdeth no treason, but is plain and open, ne yieldeth to any indiscreet affection, but giveth wholesome counsel, which the ill advised prince refuseth. The delightful gold filled with poison betokeneth flattery, which under fair seeming of pleasant words beareth deadly poison, which destroyeth the prince that receiveth it. As befel in the two brethren, Ferrex and Porrex, who, refusing the wholesome advice of grave counsellors, credited these young parasites, and brought to themselves death and destruction thereby.

But it is time to set forth the plot in more detail. The importance of *Gorboduc* as an example of English 'classical' tragedy prompts us to follow it through, scene by scene.

Act I, Scene 1.—Queen Videna discovers to her favourite and elder son, Ferrex, the king's intention, grievous in her eyes, of dividing his kingdom equally between his two sons. *Scene 2.*—King Gorboduc submits his plan to the consideration of his three counsellors, whose wise and lengthy reasonings he listens to but elects to disregard.

Act II, Scene 1.—The division having been carried out, Ferrex, in his part of the kingdom, is prompted by

evil counsel to suspect aggressive rivalry from his brother, and decides to collect forces for his own defence. *Scene 2.*—Ferrex's misguided precautions having been maliciously represented to Porrex as directed against his power, that prince resolves upon an immediate invasion of his brother's realm.

Act III.—The news of these counter-moves and of the imminent probability of bloodshed is reported to the king. To restore the courage of the despairing Gorboduc is now the labour of his counsellors, but the later announcement of the death of Ferrex casts him lower than before. At this point the Chorus, recalling the murder of a cousin in an earlier generation of the royal race, points, in true Aeschylean fashion, to the hatred of an unsated revenge behind this latest blow:

Thus fatal plagues pursue the guilty race,
Whose murderous hand, imbru'd with guiltless blood,
Asks vengeance still before the heaven's face,
With endless mischiefs on the cursed brood.

Act IV, Scene 1.—Videna alone, in words of passionate vehemence, laments that she has lived so long to see the death of Ferrex, renounces his brother as no child of hers, and concludes with a threat of vengeance. *Scene 2.*—Bowed down with remorse, Porrex makes his defence before the king, pleading the latter's own act, in dividing the kingdom, as the initial cause of the ensuing disaster. Before he has been long gone from his father's presence, Marcella, a lady-in-waiting, rushes into the room, in wild disorder and grief, to report his murder at his mother's hand. In anguished words she tells how, stabbed by Videna in his sleep, he started up and, spying the queen by his side, called to her for help, not crediting that she, his mother, could be his murderess. Again,

in tones of solemn warning, the Chorus reminds the audience that

> Blood asketh blood, and death must death requite:
> Jove, by his just and everlasting doom,
> Justly hath ever so requited it.

Act V, Scene 1.—This warning is proved true by a report of the death of the king and queen at the hands of their subjects in revolt against the blood-stained House. Certain of the nobles, gathered together, resolve upon an alliance for the purpose of restoring a strong government. The Duke of Albany, however, thinks to snatch power to himself from this opportunity. *Scene 2.*—Report is made of the suppression of the rebellion, but this news is immediately followed by a report of Albany's attempted usurpation of the throne. Coalition for his defeat is agreed upon, and the play ends with the mournful soliloquy of that aged counsellor who first opposed the division of the throne and now sees, as the consequence of that fatal act, his country, torn to pieces by civil strife, left an easy prize for an ambitious conqueror.

> Hereto it comes when kings will not consent
> To grave advice, but follow wilful will.
> This is the end, when in fond princes' hearts
> Flattery prevails, and sage rede[1] hath no place:
> These are the plagues, when murder is the mean
> To make new heirs unto the royal crown. . . .
> And this doth grow, when lo, unto the prince,
> Whom death or sudden hap of life bereaves,
> No certain heir remains, such certain heir,
> As not all only is the rightful heir,
> But to the realm is so made known to be;
> And troth thereby vested in subjects' hearts,
> To owe faith there where right is known to rest.

[1] counsel.

This last quotation, interesting in itself as containing a recommendation to Queen Elizabeth to marry, or at least name her successor, will also serve as a specimen of the new verse, Blank Verse, which here, for the first time, finds its way into English drama. Meeting with small favour from writers skilful in the stringing together of rhymes, it suffered comparative neglect for some years until Marlowe taught its capacities to his own and future ages. With Sackville's stiff lines before us we shall be better able to appreciate the later playwright's genius. But we shall also be reminded that the credit of introducing blank verse must lie with the older man.

The chief question of all remains to be asked. Does *Gorboduc*, with all its borrowed devices, *and because of them*, rise to a higher level of tragedy than *Cambyses* and *Appius and Virginia*? To answer this question we must examine the effect of those devices, and understand what is precisely meant by the term tragedy. Let it be first understood that the arrangement of acts and scenes is comparatively unimportant in this connexion, though most helpful in giving clearness to the action. Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (in the earlier edition) dispenses with it; so does Milton's *Samson Agonistes*; and we have just seen that the great Greek dramatists knew nothing of it. What is important is the exclusion of that comic element which, in some form or another, had hitherto found a place in almost every English play; the removal of all action from the stage—for the Dumb Shows stand apart from the play—; and the substitution of stately speeches for natural conversation and dialogue. Of all three the purpose is the same, namely, to impress the audience with a sense of greater dignity and awe than would be imparted by a more familiar style. The long speeches give importance to the decisions, and compel a belief that momentous

events are about to happen or have happened. In harmony with this effect is the absence of all comic relief—although Shakespeare was to prove later that this has a useful place in tragedy. A smile, a jest would be sacrilege in the prevailing gloom. Two effects alone are aimed at; an impression of loftiness in the theme, and a profound melancholy. Not warm gushing tears. Those are the outcome of a personal sorrow, small and ignoble beside an abstract grief at 'the falls of princes', 'the tumbling down of crowns', 'the ruin of proud realms'. What does the reader or spectator know of Ferrex that he should mingle his cries with Videna's lamentations? The account of Porrex appealing, with childlike faith in his mother, to the very woman who has murdered him, may, for the moment, bring tears to the eyes. But it is an accidental touch. The tragedy lies not there but in the great fact that with him dies the last heir to the throne, the last hope of avoiding the miseries of a disputed succession; and that in her revengeful fury the queen, as a woman, has committed the blackest of all crimes, a mother's slaughter of her child. We are not asked to weep but to gasp at the horror of it. It is in order to protect the loftier, broader aspects of the catastrophe from the influence of the particular that action is excluded. This cautions us against confusing tragedy and pathos. To perceive the difference is to recognize that English Tragedy really begins with *Gorboduc*. Until its advent the stress laid on the pathetic partially obscured the tragic. This may be seen at once in the Miracles, though a little thought will reveal the intensely tragic nature of the complete Miracle Play. In *Cambyses* we find the same obscuration: there is tragedy in the sudden ending of those young lives, but the pathos of the mother's anguish and the sweet girl's pleadings prevent us from thinking of it. *Appius and*

Virginia maintains a much truer tragic detachment, the effect being heightened by its opening picture of virtuous happiness destined to abrupt and tyrannous ruin. But it expresses itself so ill, shatters our hearing so unmercifully with its alliterative mouthing, and hurls us down so steeply with its low comedy, that we refuse to give its characters the grandeur or excellence claimed for them by the author. *Gorboduc* alone presents tragedy unspoiled by extraneous additions. In its triple catastrophe of princes, crown and realm we perceive the awful figure of the Tragic Muse and shrink back in reverent fear of what more may lie hid from us in the folds of her black robe. Darker, much darker and more terrible things have come since from that gloomy spirit. What has been written here should not be misinterpreted as an exaggerated appreciation of *Gorboduc*. We wish only to insist that this play did give to English drama for the first time (if we exclude translations) an example, however weak in execution, of pure tragedy ; and was able to do so largely, if not entirely, by reason of its reversion to classical principles and devices.

We have insisted on the difference between Tragedy and Pathos, and criticized the weakening effect of the latter upon the former. To escape the penalty that awaits general criticism we may add here that Tragedy is never greater than when her handmaid is ready to do her *modest* service. Sophocles puts into the mouth of Oedipus, at the moment of his departure into blind and desolate exile, tender injunctions regarding the care of his young daughters :

> But my poor maidens, hapless and forlorn,
> Who never had a meal apart from mine,
> But ever shared my table, yea, for them
> Take heedful care ; and grant me, though but once,

> Yea, I beseech thee, with these hands to feel,
> Thou noble heart! the forms I love so well,
> And weep with them our common misery.
> Oh, if my arms were round them, I might seem
> To have them as of old when I could see.[1]

Shakespeare, too, knew well how to kindle the soft radiance which, fading again, makes the ensuing darkness darker still. Ophelia, the sleeping Duncan, Cordelia rise to our minds. Nor need we quote the famous words of Webster's Ferdinand. It is enough that the greatest scene in *Gorboduc* is precisely that scene where pathos softens by a momentary dimness of vision our horror at a mother's crime.

The Misfortunes of Arthur (1587), by Thomas Hughes, though twenty-five years later, may be placed next to *Gorboduc* in our discussion of the rise of tragedy. It will serve as an illustration of the kind of tragedy that was being evolved from Senecan models by plodding uninspired Englishmen before Marlowe flung his flaming torch amongst them. To understand the story a slight introduction is necessary. Igerna, the wife of Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, was loved by King Uther, who foully slew her husband and so won her for himself. As a result of this union were born Arthur and Anne, who, in their youth, perpetuated the inherited taint of sin by becoming the parents of a boy, Mordred. Afterwards Arthur married Guenevera, and some years later went to France on a long campaign of conquest. In his absence Mordred gained the love of Guenevera. The play begins with the contemplated return of Arthur, glorious from victory, the object being to concentrate attention upon the swift fall from glory and power to ruin and death. Guenevera, having learnt to hate her husband, debates in

[1] *Oedipus Tyrannus* (Lewis Campbell's translation).

her mind his death or hers, finally deciding, however, to become a nun. Her interview with Mordred ends in his resolving to resist Arthur's landing. Unsuccessful in this attempt, and defeated in battle, he spurns all thought of submission, challenging his father to a second conflict, in Cornwall. Arthur, feeling that his sins have found him out, would gladly make peace; but, stung by Mordred's defiance, he follows him into Cornwall. There both armies are destroyed and Mordred is slain, though in his death he mortally wounds his father. After the battle his body is brought before Arthur, in whom the sight awakens yet more fiercely the pangs of remorse. The play closes immediately before Arthur's own mysterious departure.

Here is all the material for a great tragedy. The point for beginning the story is well chosen, though in obvious imitation of *Agamemnon*. Attention is concentrated on the catastrophe, no alien element being admitted to detract from the melancholy effect. It is sought to intensify the gloom by recourse to Seneca's stage Ghost; thus, the departed spirit of the wronged Gorlois opens the play with horrid imprecations of evil upon the house of Uther, and, at the close, exults in the fullness of his revenge. From his mouth, as well as from the lips of Arthur, and again from the Chorus (which closes the acts, as in *Gorboduc*) we learn the great purpose beneath this overwhelming ruin of a king and kingdom—to show that the day and the hour do come, however long deferred, when

Wrong hath his wreak, and guilt his guerdon bears.

As before, all action is rigorously excluded from the stage, to be reported, at great length and with tremendous striving after vividness and effect, by one who was present.

Dumb Shows before each act continue the attempt to balance matters spectacularly. Clearly the only hope of dramatic advance for disciples of the Senecan school lay in improved dialogue. This was possible in four directions, namely, in more stirring topics, in more personal feeling, in shorter speeches, and in a change in the style of language and verse. Unfortunately for Thomas Hughes, it is just here that he fails, and fails lamentably. What is more, he fails because of his methods. The dominant desire of the English 'classical' school was to be impressive. Hence the adoption by Hughes of a ghostly introduction and conclusion. His conversations, therefore, must reflect the same idea. He saw, indeed, that long speeches, except at rare intervals, were tedious, and reduced his to reasonable proportions, even making extensive use—as, we shall see, the author of *Damon and Pythias* did before him—of the Greek device of stichomythia. He was most anxious, also, to provide stirring topics for his characters to speak on, the queen's uncertainty between crime and religion in the second scene being a notable example. But of necessity the distance of time and space imposed by his methods between an event and the reporting of it gives a measure of detachment to its discussion. In the matter of personal feeling, too, he was hampered by this same unavoidable detachment, and by the need of being impressive; for he and his friends seem to have been convinced that the wider and less particular the subject the greater would be the hearer's awe. We need only compare Arthur's speech over Mordred's body with the lamentation of the mother in *Cambyses* to perceive how the new methods compel the king to hasten from the thought of the 'hapless boy' to a consideration of their joint fate as 'a mirror to the world'. Because, in *Cambyses*, we know so little more

of the boy and his mother than her grief, his murder fails as tragedy; but had Arthur indulged a little in such grief as her's, how much more moving would have been the tragedy of *The Misfortunes of Arthur*! But this was not the way of the Senecan school. Everywhere we find the same preference, as in *Gorboduc*, for broad argument and easily detachable expressions of philosophic wisdom. What shall be said of the style of language and verse? This much in praise, that Blank Verse is retained. But —and the thoughtful reader will discern that the same fatal influence is at work here as elsewhere—Hughes relapses, deliberately, into the artificial speech of *Appius and Virginia*. Alliteration charms him with its too artful aid. Nowhere has R. B. such rant as falls from the pen of Hughes. In the last battle between Arthur and Mordred 'boist'rous bangs with thumping thwacks fall thick', while the younger leader rages over the field 'all fury-like, frounc'd up with frantic frets'. Guenevera revives her declining wrath with this invocation of supernatural aid:

> Come, spiteful fiends, come, heaps of furies fell,
> Not one by one, but all at once! my breast
> Raves not enough: it likes me to be fill'd
> With greater monsters yet. My heart doth throb,
> My liver boils: somewhat my mind portends,
> Uncertain what; but whatsoever, it's huge.

A fairer example, however, of Hughes's style may be taken from Cador's speech urging Arthur to adopt severe measures against Mordred (*Act III, Scene 1*):

> No worse a vice than lenity in kings;
> Remiss indulgence soon undoes a realm.
> He teacheth how to sin that winks at sins,
> And bids offend that suffereth an offence.
> The only hope of leave increaseth crimes,

And he that pardoneth one, embold'neth all
To break the laws. Each patience fostereth wrong.
But vice severely punish'd faints at foot,
And creeps no further off than where it falls.
One sour example will prevent more vice
Than all the best persuasions in the world.
Rough rigour looks out right, and still prevails:
Smooth mildness looks too many ways to thrive.
Wherefore, since Mordred's crimes have wrong'd the laws
In so extreme a sort, as is too strange,
Let right and justice rule with rigour's aid,
And work his wrack at length, although too late;
That damning laws, so damned by the laws,
He may receive his deep deserved doom.
So let it fare with all that dare the like:
Let sword, let fire, let torments be their end.
Severity upholds both realm and rule.

One feature remains to be spoken of, a feature which redeems the play from an otherwise deserved obscurity. We refer to the author's creation of characters fit for tragedy. Sackville's royalties are dull folk, great only by rank. Arthur and Mordred are men of a grander breed, men worthy to rise to heights and win the attention of the world by their fall. Nor does the author forget the artistic strength achieved by contrast. Arthur is depicted as a veteran warrior, contented with his conquests, and anxious to establish peace within his kingdom. He is remorseful, too, for past sins, and is ready to make amends by yielding up to Mordred the coveted throne—until that prince's insolence makes compromise impossible. Mordred, on the other hand, stands before us as the young, ambitious, dauntless aspirant to power, scorning cautious fears, flinging back every overture for peace, reaching forward to the goal of his hate even across the confines of life. At the risk of quoting too much we append (with the

omission of two interruptions) Mordred's speech in favour of resisting his father:

> He falleth well, that falling fells his foe.
> Small manhood were to turn my back to chance.
> I bear no breast so unprepar'd for harms.
> Even that I hold the kingliest point of all,
> To brook afflictions well: and by how much
> The more his state and tottering empire sags,
> To fix so much the faster foot on ground.
> No fear but doth forejudge, and many fall
> Into their fate, whiles they do fear their fate.
> Where courage quails, the fear exceeds the harm:
> Yea, worse than war itself is fear of war.

From the brief list of other tragedies preserved from this period of development, and including such plays as *Tancred and Gismunda* (1568) and Whetstone's *Promos and Cassandra* (printed 1578)—the latter chiefly interesting on account of the criticism of contemporary drama contained in its Dedication—we select *Damon and Pythias* (before 1567) by Richard Edwards as an example of native tragedy influenced but not subjugated by classical models. To be exact, it is a tragi-comedy, but it is very improbable that the method of presentment would have been different had it ended tragically; therefore it will suit our purpose. Of importance is the date, some three or four years later than *Gorboduc* and seventy years earlier than *The Misfortunes of Arthur*. When we call to mind the form finally adopted for tragedy by Shakespeare, we shall find this play an illuminating beacon, lighting the first steps along the right path. The author was well acquainted with classical drama, as may be seen in his use of stichomythia, amongst other things, and possibly in his preference for a Grecian story. He probably knew *Gorboduc* quite well, and learned much from its faults. Backed by this knowledge he selected, adapted, and

rejected methods at discretion, and stood finally and definitely by the fundamental principles of the native English drama, placing all his action on the stage and fearlessly admitting light humorous elements to relieve the strain of too insistent emotion or suspense. That in one place he went too far in this direction cannot be denied: the episode of the shaving of Grim the Collier is a bad error of judgment, founded on a right motive but horribly mismanaged. That mistake, however, is so glaring that it must have been obvious to all succeeding writers; it could not seriously affect their judgment of the methods employed in the rest of the play. It is these methods that we must understand.

First, to sketch the plot. Damon and Pythias with their servant Stephano arrive in Syracuse in the reign of the tyrant, Dionysius. There Damon is arrested on the denunciation of the informer Carisophus, and is sentenced to death as a spy. Reprieve for six months is allowed him on the pledge of Pythias's life as bail, and at the last minute he returns, just in time to save the life of his devoted and willing friend. Such signal proofs of the sincerity of their affection win for both of them not only life but royal favour, the king turning from his evil ways to follow their counsel. A character of importance not mentioned here is Aristippus, 'a pleasant gentleman' and a successful courtier, whose friendship with Carisophus, an alliance hollow, suspicious, and most unloving on one side at least, forms an admirable foil for the true friendship of Damon and Pythias.

There is no division into acts and scenes, but the omission amounts to little more than the absence of those words from the printed copy, since the plot is most carefully arranged—witness the gradual introduction of the characters and preparation for the arrest of Damon—and the

stage is frequently cleared. In fact it is perfectly easy to insert the customary labels of acts and scenes at these latter points, in the manner employed, for example, in the 1616 edition of Marlowe's *Faustus*. There are no Dumb Shows, there is no Chorus, there is no Ghost. But our old friend the Vice is there—without his Devil; the clown too, and Herod; and we note with interest the modifications which were considered necessary before they could figure creditably on the tragic stage. Herod needed small alteration: the plot demands a tyrant of ferocious injustice, who can 'fall in dump and foam like a boar' at a moment's notice, or Damon cannot be judged worthy of death for his offence. The clown, whose sins, when he committed any, were always rather the product of evil influence than of original sin, is ennobled to the standing of an honest faithful slave, simple in his notions, shrewd to save his own skin, overjoyed at being made a freed man, and withal one who keeps good time by his stomach; in a word, Stephano. The Vice (of whom Will and Jack are lighter adaptations), the source of all mischief, the Newfangle of *Like Will to Like* and the Diccon of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, is Carisophus, the disappointed courtier, who endeavours to creep back to favour by double-dealing with Aristippus and by practising the base treachery of a common informer, and who finally is kicked out of court and off the stage by Eubulus, the good counsellor. These adaptations, then, of the stock Interlude characters, are merely a continuation of the changes initiated by Heywood and others of his day and amplified in the first regular comedies; they owe nothing to classical influence. But the same feeling after naturalness which makes Stephano and Carisophus such well-defined realities influences for good the portraits of the other characters. Aristippus is a thoroughly well

drawn likeness of the easy-going, gracefully selfish, polished courtier; and Damon and Pythias weary us only by reason of the weight of virtue thrust upon them by the original story, and not to be avoided, therefore, if the plot was to hold. Even the verse reflects the healthy desire to avoid artificiality. We shall not attempt to praise it: the roughness in the flow of lines constantly and quite irregularly varying in length can find little to defend it and many sensitive critics to denounce it. But there is hardly any doubt that this unevenness was due, not to a false ear for metre, but to a deliberate attempt to get rid of the unnatural formalism of correct rhymed verse. Rhyme is retained; but blank verse had only recently appeared and was still in ill favour. Edwards's device was another experiment in the same direction. Needless to say, alliteration is not called in to reinforce weak sentiments.

Possibly attributable to classical influence is the adoption of the serious, half-philosophical tone noticed in *Gorboduc* and *The Misfortunes of Arthur*. This quality the author judged to be a harmonious element in tragedy, and judged aright, though, as was natural at so early a stage, he tended to exaggerate it. Shakespeare's greatest tragedies abound in passages of deep reflexion upon life, death, and the problems of right and wrong. We may choose to place the origin of this grave spirit in the 'classics', but it may be pointed out, with reason, that the persistent traditions of the Moralities, the pious moralizings retained in such Interludes as *Like Will to Like*, may just as easily have passed over naturally into Edwards's work along with the Vice. In support of this other source may be cited the absence from this play of the long speeches which went hand in hand with the learned reasoning and soliloquies of Sackville and Norton.

Quite undeniably of classical influence, however, is the refinement and restraint noticeable throughout the play. These we welcome. They prune the tree of native drama without hacking off its stoutest limbs. Under their control tragedy steps upon the stage in an English dress to prove herself worthy of her Roman sister and ultimately capable of far greater achievements.

To select details in proof of the success of *Damon and Pythias* as a pioneer in tragedy is made difficult by the fact that it ends happily. But attention may be called to the very praiseworthy treatment of the comic characters—notably Stephano and the gruff but kind-hearted hangman, Gronno—and to the humanity which vitalizes the major personages, Carisophus in particular; to the dignity also, maintained throughout the play (the Collier episode alone excepted), and to the admirably dramatic suspense secured just before Damon's return. The following extract is drawn from Pythias's farewell speech at that time, delivered on the scaffold in accordance with the best English customs:

But why do I stay any longer, seeing that one man's death
May suffice, O king, to pacify thy wrath?
O thou minister of justice, do thine office by and by,
Let not thy hand tremble, for I tremble not to die.
Stephano, the right pattern of true fidelity,
Commend me to thy master, my sweet Damon, and of him crave liberty
When I am dead, in my name; for thy trusty services
Hath well deserved a gift far better than this.
O my Damon, farewell now for ever, a true friend, to me most dear;
Whiles life doth last, my mouth shall still talk of thee,
And when I am dead, my simple ghost, true witness of amity,
Shall hover about the place, wheresoever thou be.

Before this chapter closes a word remains to be said about the rise of History Plays. Pre-eminently they are the outcome of a patriotism that was growing stronger and stronger as each year increased the glory of Queen Elizabeth's reign. Nothing in them is more noteworthy than the pride in England, in England's kings, and in England's defiance and conquest of her foes. Whether we read *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* (acted before 1588) or *The Troublesome Reign of King John* (printed 1591) we find the same joyous presentment of courageous victory. Unfortunately for the author of the latter play, his royal subject fell away sadly in his submission to the Pope; yet the writer would not entirely concede the victory to Rome, and having made the very most of his king's campaign in France and his defiant rejection of the Papal demands, he attempts to redeem the situation, even in the dreadful moment of John's kneeling supplication to Pandulph, by putting into the former's mouth 'asides' expressing a heart completely at variance with the formal penitence; in fact this scene might be understood as a clever hoodwinking of the enemy to circumvent the Dauphin. With true artistic and patriotic instinct the author creates the redoubtable Faulconbridge to demonstrate that Englishmen were stout of heart and loyal to the throne in its worst perils, whatever might be the temporary failings of the king and a few nobles. In *The Famous Victories* the earlier author had for his central figure a type of character that will always appeal to an English audience. Here we find in fullest expression that free introduction of the comic by the side of the serious, and that love for jovial intercourse between royalty and subjects which are so frequent in our History Plays. The roistering of Prince Hal among his boon

companions in the tavern, his boxing of the Judge's ears, and his consequent arrest ; these hold the stage for the first six scenes (there are no acts, in this play or in the other), and contain several touches and incidents borrowed afterwards by Shakespeare for his *Falstaff*. Indeed it is surprising to observe how extensively that great genius appropriated the work of other men. While commonly refining the language, he was not above borrowing thought as well as incident—even for the famous lines by the Bastard, Faulconbridge, closing *King John*.

The form of the History Plays is a direct continuation of the methods of the old Miracles, and does not differ in essentials from that found in Shakespeare's ' Histories '. Such differences as do occur are due, as a rule, to minor differences of arrangement and length. The author of *The Troublesome Reign of King John* extended his theme into two plays, and so found room for much that had to be omitted in a single play ; Shakespeare, on the other hand, spread over three plays the royal character—Henry V—which his predecessor comprehended in one. The historical method had, however, a certain effect on the English drama. It made extremely popular, by its patriotic subjects, a form which disregarded the skilful evolution of a plot, contenting itself with a succession of scenes, arranged merely in order of time, that should carry a comprehensive story to its finish. We shall see this influence operating disastrously in plays other than History, and must mark it as a retrograde movement in the development of perfect drama. One extremely valuable contribution of these History Plays was their insistence upon absolute humanness in the characters. To present a Prince Hal, a King John or a Faulconbridge, a Queen Elinor or a Constance, as mere mouthpieces or merely royal persons would have been to court immediate failure

before an audience of Englishmen imbued with intense pride in the life and vigour of their country, their countrymen, and their Queen.

Of the three following extracts from *The Troublesome Reign of King John* the first is a speech which might well have found a place in Shakespeare's first scene, where Faulconbridge is questioned as to his parentage, the inheritance depending on his answer; the second is from one of John's dying speeches, full of remorse for his bad government, and may be compared dramatically with the better known speeches, full only of outcry against his bodily affliction; the third illustrates the spirit of patriotic pride which glows in every scene.

[PHILIP (*the* BASTARD), *fallen into a trance of thought, speaks aside to himself.*]

Quo me rapit tempestas?
What wind of honour blows this fury forth?
Or whence proceed these fumes of majesty?
Methinks I hear a hollow echo sound
That Philip is the son unto a king.
The whistling leaves upon the trembling trees
Whistle in consort I am Richard's son:
The bubbling murmur of the water's fall
Records *Philippus Regis Filius*:
Birds in their flight make music with their wings,
Filling the air with glory of my birth:
Birds, bubbles, leaves, and mountain's echo, all
Ring in mine ears that I am Richard's son.
Fond man! ah, whither art thou carried?
How are thy thoughts ywrapt in honour's heaven?
Forgetful what thou art, and whence thou camest.
Thy father's land cannot maintain these thoughts;
These thoughts are far unfitting Fauconbridge:
And well they may; for why, this mounting mind
Doth soar too high to stoop to Fauconbridge.

2.

[KING JOHN, *feeling the near approach of death, is filled with remorse.*]

Methinks I see a catalogue of sin
Wrote by a fiend in marble characters,
The least enough to lose my part in heaven.
Methinks the devil whispers in mine ears
And tells me 'tis in vain to hope for grace,
I must be damned for Arthur's sudden death.
I see, I see a thousand thousand men
Come to accuse me for my wrong on earth,
And there is none so merciful a God
That will forgive the number of my sins.
How have I liv'd but by another's loss?
What have I lov'd but wreck of other's weal?
When have I vow'd and not infring'd mine oath?
Where have I done a deed deserving well?
How, what, when and where have I bestow'd a day
That tended not to some notorious ill?
My life, replete with rage and tyranny,
Craves little pity for so strange a death;
Or who will say that John deceas'd too soon?
Who will not say he rather liv'd too long?

3.

[ARTHUR *warns the* KING OF FRANCE *not to expect ready submission from* JOHN.]

I rather think the menace of the world
Sounds in his ears as threats of no esteem;
And sooner would he scorn Europa's power
Than lose the smallest title he enjoys;
For questionless he is an Englishman.

CHAPTER V

COMEDY: LYLY, GREENE, PEELE, NASH

The term 'University Wits' is the title given to a group of scholarly young men who, from 1584 onwards, for about ten years, took up play-writing as a serious profession, and by their abilities and genius raised English drama to the rank of literature. Previous dramatists had also been men of good education and fair wit; Sackville, to name but one, was a man of great gifts and sound learning. But tradition has restricted the name to seven men whom time, circumstances, mental qualities and mutual acquaintanceship brought together as one group. The majority stood to each other almost in the relation of friends; they were rivals for public favour, were well acquainted with each other's work, and were quick to follow one another along improved paths. Taking up comedy at the stage of *Ralph Roister Doister* and tragedy at that of *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, they transformed and refined both, lifting them to higher levels of humour and passion, gracing them with many witty inventions, and, above all, pouring into the pallid arteries of drama the rich vitalizing blood of a new poetry. The seven men were Lyly, Greene, Peele, Nash, Lodge, Kyd and Marlowe—named not in chronological sequence but in the order of their discussion in these pages.

Perhaps no dramatist is more out of touch with modern taste than John Lyly. The ordinary reader, taking up one of his plays by chance, will probably set it down wearily after the perusal of barely one or two acts. And

yet Lyly excels any of his contemporaries in witty invention, and is the creator of what has been called High Comedy. His importance, therefore, in the history of the growth of the drama is considerable. Nor is his fancy found to be so dull when approached in the right spirit. True, it requires an effort to step back into the shoes of an Elizabethan courtier. But the effort is worth making, since the mind, as soon as it has realized what not to expect, is better able to appreciate what is offered. The essential requirement is to remember that Lyly the dramatist is the same man as Lyly the euphuist, and that his audience was always a company of courtiers, with Queen Elizabeth in their midst, infatuated with admiration for the new phraseology and mode of thought known as Euphuism. If we consider the manner in which these lords and ladies spent their time at court, filling idle hours with compliment, love-making, veiled jibe and swift retort; if we read our *Euphues* again, renewing our acquaintance with its absurdly elaborated and stilted style, its tireless winding of sentences round a topic without any advance in thought, its affectation of philosophy and classical learning; if we remember that to speak euphuistically was a coveted and studiously cultivated accomplishment, and that to pun, to utter caustic jests, to let fall neat epigrams were the highest ambition of wit; if we take this trouble to prepare ourselves for reading Lyly's plays, we may still find them dull, but we shall at least understand why they took the form they did, and shall be in a position to recognize the substantial service rendered to Comedy by the author. Lyly's work was just the application of the laws of euphuism to native comedy, and it wrought a change curiously similar to the effect of Senecan principles upon native tragedy, transferring the importance from the

action to the words. It may be remarked that this redistribution of the interest must always be of great value in the early stage of any literature. The popular taste for action and incident is sure to be gratified sooner or later; the demand for elegant and appropriate diction, usually confined to the cultured few, is more apt to be passed over. Euphuism never did the harm to comedy which tragedy suffered at the hands of the late Elizabethans who, in their pursuit of moving incident, lost themselves in a reckless licence of language and verse. Action, therefore, fell into the background. Refinement, elevation was aimed at. In the place of Hodge, Dame Chat and their company, there now appeared gracious beings of perfect manners and speech; and since things Greek and mythological had become the fashion, Arcadian nymphs and swains, beauteous goddesses and Athenian philosophers were judged the most fitting to stand before the English court. In scene after scene fair ladies talk of love, reverend sages display their readiness in solving knotty problems, lovers sigh into the air long rhapsodies over the charms of their mistresses, sharp-tongued (but rarely coarse) serving-boys lure fools into greater folly or exchange amusing badinage at the expense of their absent masters. The story does not advance much, but that is of small account so long as the dialogue tickles ears taught to find delight in well-spoken euphuism. It is like listening to a song in a language one does not understand: provided that the harmony is beautiful one is not distressed about the verbal message. Besides, there is some plot, slight though it be, and its theme is love, chiefly of the languishing, half-hopeless kind which was supposed to be cherished by every bachelor courtier for the queen. There is, too, for those who can read it, an allegory often concealed in the story of disappointed

love or ambition which moves round Cynthia or Diana or Sapho. Was there no lover who aspired as Endymion aspired, no Spanish king meriting the fate of Mydas, no man favoured as was Phao by Sapho? Even at this distance of time we can amuse ourselves by guessing names, and so catch something of the interest which, at the time of the play's appearance, would set eyebrows arching with surprise, and send, at each daring reference or well-aimed compliment, a nod of approving intelligence around the audience.

Lyly wrote eight comedies: *Campaspe* (printed 1584), *Sapho and Phao* (printed 1584), *Endymion* (printed 1591), *Gallathea* (printed 1592), *Mydas* (printed 1592), *Mother Bombie* (printed 1594), *The Woman in the Moon* (printed 1597), *Love's Metamorphoses* (printed 1601). All these, with the exception of the seventh—which is in regular and pleasing, though not vigorous, blank verse—were written in prose, as we should expect from the founder of so famous a prose style; but as *The Supposes*, a translation by Gascoigne of Ariosto's *I Suppositi*, had previously appeared in prose, Lyly's claim as an innovator is weakened. The fact, however, that Ariosto wrote a prose, as well as a poetic, version of his play, and that Gascoigne made use of both in his translation, gives to the latter's prose a borrowed quality, and leaves Lyly fully entitled to whatever credit belongs to the earliest native productions of this kind. He was the first to announce, by practice, the theory that English comedy could find fuller expression in prose than in verse, for, beginning with verse, he deliberately set it aside in favour of prose, and, having proved the superiority of prose for this purpose, persisted in it to the end. Of his eight plays, the more interesting only will be dealt with here; the rest we leave to the curiosity of the reader.

Campaspe, his first prose comedy, is perhaps the most perfect example of the new euphuistic method at work. The plot is of the slightest. Alexander the Great is in love with the beauty of Campaspe, a Theban captive; but Apelles, the artist, who is ordered to paint her picture, having also fallen in love with her, and won her love, Alexander in the end graciously resigns his claim upon her. This is the plot, but it is very little guide to the contents of the play, which is crowded with characters. There are, in addition to the three leading persons, four Warriors to discuss the condition of the army, seven Philosophers to puzzle each other with disputation and metaphysical conundrums, three Servants to deride their masters behind their backs, a General to act as Alexander's confidant and counsellor, beside some nine others and a company of citizens. One of the chief characters, Diogenes, stands quite apart from the plot, his office being to provide an inexhaustible fund of shrewd, biting retorts for such as dare to question him. He is even elevated to the centre of a major episode in which the Athenian populace, credulous of a report that he is about to fly, is deceived into hearing a very sharp sermon as, on the wings of criticism, Diogenes executes an oratorical flight over their many failings. The following scene between him and a beggar reveals the nature of his wit.

Alexander (*aside*). Behold Diogenes talking with one at his tub.

Crysus. One penny, Diogenes; I am a Cynic.

Diogenes. He made thee a beggar, that first gave thee anything.

Crysus. Why, if thou wilt give nothing, nobody will give thee.

Diogenes. I want nothing, till the springs dry and the earth perish.

Crysus. I gather for the Gods.

Diogenes. And I care not for those Gods which want money.

Crysus. Thou art not a right Cynic that wilt give nothing.

Diogenes. Thou art not, that wilt beg anything.

Crysus (*seeing Alexander*). Alexander, King Alexander, give a poor Cynic a groat.

Alexander. It is not for a king to give a groat.

Crysus. Then give me a talent.

Alexander. It is not for a beggar to ask a talent. Away!

The charm of the play lies in the romance of Apelles' love for Campaspe, and in the delicacy of his wooing. Here is pure Romantic Comedy, such as Greene imitated and Shakespeare made delightful. Not at first will Campaspe yield the gates of her heart, nor does the artist press the attack with heated fervour. So gentle a besieger is he, that we perceive the young couple drifting into love on the stream of destiny, almost reluctant to betray their growing feelings through fear of the wrath of Alexander. Apelles is already smitten but Campaspe is still 'fancy free' when, in the artist's studio, she questions him about his pictures.

Campaspe. What counterfeit is this, Apelles?

Apelles. This is Venus, the Goddess of love.

Campaspe. What, be there also loving Goddesses?

Apelles. This is she that hath power to command the very affections of the heart.

Campaspe. How is she hired? by prayer, by sacrifice, or bribes?

Apelles. By prayer, sacrifice, and bribes.

Campaspe. What prayer?

Apelles. Vows irrevocable.

Campaspe. What sacrifice?

Apelles. Hearts ever sighing, never dissembling.

Campaspe. What bribes?

Apelles. Roses and kisses. But were you never in love?

Campaspe. No, nor love in me.

Apelles. Then have you injured many.

Campaspe. How so?

Apelles. Because you have been loved of many.

Campaspe. Flattered perchance of some.

Apelles. It is not possible that a face so fair, and a wit so sharp, both without comparison, should not be apt to love.

Campaspe. If you begin to tip your tongue with cunning, I pray dip your pencil in colours; and fall to that you must do, not that you would do.

Thus she sets him aside. Poor Apelles, alone, in a later scene laments his fate in loving her whom Alexander desires, ending his mournful soliloquy with a song, the most beautiful of all that Lyly has scattered so lavishly through his plays.

> Cupid and my Campaspe played
> At cards for kisses; Cupid paid.
> He stakes his quiver, bow, and arrows,
> His mother's doves, and team of sparrows;
> Loses them too; then, down he throws
> The coral of his lip, the rose
> Growing on 's cheek, (but none knows how)
> With these the crystal of his brow,
> And then the dimple of his chin:
> All these did my Campaspe win.
> At last he set her both his eyes;
> She won, and Cupid blind did rise.
> O love! has she done this to thee?
> What shall (alas!) become of me?

But when the picture is nearly finished, when the sittings are almost over and with them the intimacy of artist and model, then we discover that the tender sighs of Apelles have sweetened the friendship of Campaspe

into love, and the secret of each soul is known to the other.

Apelles. I have now, Campaspe, almost made an end.
Campaspe. You told me, Apelles, you would never end.
Apelles. Never end my love, for it shall be eternal.
Campaspe. That is, neither to have beginning nor ending.
Apelles. You are disposed to mistake: I hope you do not mistrust.
Campaspe. What will you say if Alexander perceive your love?
Apelles. I will say it is no treason to love.
Campaspe. But how if he will not suffer thee to see my person?
Apelles. Then will I gaze continually on thy picture.
Campaspe. That will not feed thy heart.
Apelles. Yet shall it fill mine eye: besides, the sweet thoughts, the sure hopes, thy protested faith, will cause me to embrace thy shadow continually in mine arms, of the which by strong imagination I will make a substance.
Campaspe. Well, I must be gone. But of this assure yourself, that I had rather be in thy shop grinding colours than in Alexander's court, following higher fortunes.

By a happy stroke of wit Alexander, guessing the truth of the matter, makes Apelles confess indirectly and unconsciously what discretion would enjoin him to keep concealed. Apelles and Alexander are talking together when a servant rushes up, crying out that the former's studio is on fire. 'Aye me!' exclaims the horrified artist; 'if the picture of Campaspe be burnt I am undone!' Alexander smiles, for the servant's alarm is false and pre-arranged, but the alarm of Apelles is too genuine to have less than the one meaning.

For its own sake, as too choice an example of euphuistic prose to be missed, we add an extract from the speech of Hephestion, Alexander's friend and adviser, urging that

king to shake off the fetters of love that bind his arms from further conquest.

Beauty is like the blackberry, which seemeth red when it is not ripe, resembling precious stones that are polished with honey, which the smoother they look the sooner they break. It is thought wonderful among the seamen that Mugill, of all fishes the swiftest, is found in the belly of the Bret, of all the slowest: and shall it not seem monstrous to wise men, that the heart of the greatest conqueror of the world should be found in the hands of the weakest creature of nature? of a woman? of a captive? Ermines have fair skins but foul livers; sepulchres, fresh colours but rotten bones; women, fair faces but false hearts. Remember, Alexander, thou hast a camp to govern, not a chamber; fall not from the armour of Mars to the arms of Venus, from the fiery assaults of war to the maidenly skirmishes of love, from displaying the eagle in thine ensign to set down the sparrow. I sigh, Alexander, that, where fortune could not conquer, folly should overcome.

In *Endymion* we find a much more complex plot, but less that is natural and attractive. Historical tradition and the unchanging habits of lovers give their sanction to most of the scenes in *Campaspe*. But *Endymion* carries us into the realm of mythology, where all is unreal and where the least heaviness in the pencil of fancy must convert things that should appear golden into dull lead. Lyly's wit strives gallantly to maintain the light tints, pressing fairies and moonbeams into his service, and ransacking the stores of improbability in despair of mingling the impossible and the possible effectively; but the gilt, if not entirely lost, wears very thin in places.

Endymion is in love with Cynthia, the Moon, though aware that his aspiration must remain for ever hopeless. Tellus, the Earth, herself enamoured of Endymion, jealously resolves to punish his indifference to her by

deep melancholy. Accordingly she visits the witch, Dipsas, by whose magic aid the youth, found resting on a bank of lunary, is bewitched to sleep until old age. Not for this crime but for a minor one, Tellus is sentenced by Cynthia to imprisonment under the care of Corsites. Eumenides, the loyal friend of Endymion, seeks everywhere for the means to awaken his comrade, until he finds a clue in the magic fountain of Geron, husband to old Dipsas, but banished by her wicked power. With this clue, which is interpreted as requiring the moon to kiss the sleeper, Eumenides hastens to Cynthia. Meanwhile Tellus, finding that her beauty has taken Corsites captive, and wishing to be rid of his attentions, sets him, as a trial of his affection, the impossible, though apparently easy, task of removing Endymion from the bank of lunary. Corsites fails, and fairies send him to sleep, dancing around him with a song and pinching his unresisting body black and blue. A chance visit of Cynthia and her train fortunately arouses him, but Endymion still sleeps his forty years of manhood away undisturbed. At last Eumenides returns with his oracular clue and persuades Cynthia to attempt the cure. Very graciously the queen kisses the pale forehead. At once consciousness returns, and as a white-haired old man the once handsome young courtier arises. He has two dreams to tell (shown in Dumb Show in an earlier scene) but can offer no explanation of his bewitchment. Then Bagoa, the servant of Dipsas, betrays the secret of her mistress's crime. Dipsas and Tellus are summoned before Cynthia, who now hears for the first time the story of Endymion's devotion to her. The fact is pleasing. So far from visiting the presumption with displeasure she bids him love on, not in any hope of marriage, since that is impossible, but in the assurance of her special favour.

With that she smiles kindly upon him; like mists before the sunrise his white hairs and wrinkles vanish, his pristine beauty being restored by her genial condescension. Matters hasten to a close. Tellus is willing to marry Corsites, Eumenides wins the consent of sharp-tongued Semele to be his bride, Dipsas and Geron agree to reconciliation, and Bagoa, saved from the blasting curse of her angry mistress, weds Sir Tophas, the eccentric and ludicrous knight whose folly is thrust into the play whenever there is a danger of the main plot becoming tedious.

Certainly one cannot complain of a want of incident here. Nor is there any lack of that complex subordination of scene to scene, that building of one event upon another which is the foundation of skilful plot-structure. In this play Lyly justifies himself against those who would conclude from others of his plays that he could not construct a plot. Yet it is a disappointing comedy. Nor is the reason hard to discover. The first dozen pages show that, apart from the caricatured Sir Tophas and the inevitable Pages (or Servants), all the characters speak in exactly the same way, in fact are the same persons in all but condition. The well-managed contrast noticed in *Damon and Pythias* has no place in Lyly's arrangement of characters. Were the relation of circumstance and individual hidden, no one would know from a given speech whether Cynthia, Tellus, or Dipsas was speaking; nor would Endymion, Eumenides and Geron be better distinguished. This, for example, is from the lips of the old hag, Dipsas, as, spreading her enchantments around her victim, she mutters over his head the curse of a blasted life.

Thou that layest down with golden locks shalt not awake until they be turned to silver hairs; and that chin,

on which scarcely appeareth soft down, shall be filled with bristles as hard as broom: thou shalt sleep out thy youth and flowering time, and become dry hay before thou knewest thyself green grass; and ready by age to step into the grave when thou wakest, that was youthful in the court when thou laidest thee down to sleep.

There is one scene in the main plot which invites special mention, namely, that in which the fairies appear. This, their first entrance into English drama, must have created a mild sensation amongst the surprised and delighted spectators, as, in shimmering dress and gossamer wings, these airy sprites danced around the astonished Corsites and sang the lyrical decree of punishment for his intrusion upon their domain. The incident is worth quoting in full, from the point where Corsites' labours are suddenly interrupted.

[*Enter* FAIRIES.]

Corsites. But what are these so fair fiends that cause my hairs to stand upright, and spirits to fall down? Hags, out alas, Nymphs, I crave pardon. Aye me, but what do I hear?

[*The* FAIRIES *dance, and with a Song pinch him, and he falleth asleep. They kiss* ENDYMION *and depart.*]

Omnes. Pinch him, pinch him, black and blue;
Saucy mortals must not view
What the Queen of Stars is doing,
Nor pry into our fairy wooing.

1 Fairy. Pinch him blue.

2 Fairy. And pinch him black.

3 Fairy. Let him not lack
Sharp nails to pinch him blue and red,
Till sleep has rock'd his addle head.

4 Fairy. For the trespass he hath done,
Spots o'er all his flesh shall run.
Kiss Endymion, kiss his eyes,
Then to our midnight heidegyes. [*Exeunt.*]

An additional interest of allegorical meaning attaches to the story of Endymion and Cynthia as told by Lyly, curious students tracing behind it all the details of the *affaire* between the Earl of Leicester and Queen Elizabeth. To learn the extent to which the inquiry has been pursued we may turn to Professor Ward's *English Dramatic Literature* and read the following: 'Mr. Halpin has examined at length the question of the secret meaning of Lyly's comedy, and has come to the conclusion that it is a dramatic representation of the disgrace brought upon Leicester (Endymion) by his clandestine marriage with the Countess of Sheffield (Tellus), pending his suit for the hand of his royal mistress (Cynthia). Endymion's forty years' sleep upon the bank of lunary is his imprisonment at Elizabeth's favourite Greenwich; the friendly intervention of Eumenides is that of the Earl of Sussex; and the solution of the difficulty in Tellus's marriage to Corsites is the marriage of the Countess of Sheffield to Sir Edward Stafford. I need pursue this solution no further, except to note that under the three heads of "highly probable", "probable", and "not improbable", Mr. Halpin has assigned originals to all the important characters of the piece. I am inclined to think the attempt successful.'

More entertaining to the reader than either the devotion of Endymion or the mischievous jealousy of Tellus is the character of Sir Tophas. His position in the play is that of Diogenes in *Campaspe*, and we observe the same tendency to eccentric speech and action. When we pursue the comparison further, however, we discover a marked decline in wit in the second creation. Lyly had a tradition of truth to help him in his conception of the crusty philosopher. In his picture of the foolish, boastful knight he followed the author of *Thersites* in

his exaggerated caricature until the least semblance of truth to nature is banished from the portrait. It is interesting to compare him with Ralph Roister Doister. Nevertheless if we project Sir Tophas upon the stage, and by our imagination dress him and make him strut and gesticulate after such a fashion as the text seems to indicate, we shall probably discover ourselves smiling over puns and remarks which, on casual perusal, we might pronounce flavourless imbecilities. Indeed, for sheer laughable absurdity on the stage, Sir Tophas would be hard to beat. The following scene will also show the decent quality of wit which Lyly bestowed upon his Pages—lineal descendants of the old Vice through those younger sons, Will and Jack.[1]

[Sir Tophas *and his page,* Epiton, *have just met* Samias *and* Dares.]

Tophas. What be you two?

Samias. I am Samias, page to Endymion.

Dares. And I Dares, page to Eumenides.

Tophas. Of what occupation are your masters?

Dares. Occupation, you clown! Why, they are honourable and warriors.

Tophas. Then are they my prentices.

Dares. Thine! And why so?

Tophas. I was the first that ever devised war, and therefore by Mars himself had given me for my arms a whole armoury: and thus I go as you see, clothed with artillery; it is not silks (milksops), nor tissues, nor the fine wool of Ceres, but iron, steel, swords, flame, shot, terror, clamour, blood and ruin that rocks asleep my thoughts, which never had any other cradle but cruelty. Let me see, do you not bleed?

Dares. Why so?

Tophas. Commonly my words wound.

[1] In *Damon and Pythias,* see p. 117 above.

Samias. What then do your blows?

Tophas. Not only wound, but also confound.

Samias. How darest thou come so near thy master, Epi? Sir Tophas, spare us.

Tophas. You shall live. You, Samias, because you are little; you, Dares, because you are no bigger; and both of you, because you are but two; for commonly I kill by the dozen, and have for every particular adversary a peculiar weapon. . . .

Samias. What is this? Call you it your sword?

Tophas. No, it is my scimitar; which I, by construction often studying to be compendious, call my smiter.

Dares. What, are you also learned, sir?

Tophas. Learned? I am all Mars and Ars.

Samias. Nay, you are all mass and ass.

Tophas. Mock you me? You shall both suffer, yet with such weapons as you shall make choice of the weapon wherewith you shall perish. Am I all a mass or lump? Is there no proportion in me? Am I all ass? Is there no wit in me? Epi, prepare them to the slaughter.

Samias. I pray, sir, hear us speak! We call you mass, which your learning doth well understand is all man, for *Mas maris* is a man. Then *As* (as you know) is a weight, and we for your virtues account you a weight.

Tophas. The Latin hath saved your lives, the which a world of silver could not have ransomed. I understand you, and pardon you.

Dares. Well, Sir Tophas, we bid you farewell, and at our next meeting we will be ready to do you service.

A happy combination of the romance of *Campaspe* with the mythology of *Endymion* is found in the graceful and charming comedy, *Gallathea.* Its plot is really double, though happily blended, while yet a third and independent thread of lower comedy is drawn through it. On the shores of the Humber in Lincolnshire dwell two shepherds, Tyterus and Melebeus, each the possessor of a beautiful daughter, by name Gallathea and Phillida.

Every year the god Neptune is accustomed to exact the sacrifice of the fairest girl of the country to his pet monster, the Agar (the Humber eagre), and this year each fond father dreads lest his daughter will be chosen for the victim. To save them the girls are disguised as boys. Strangers to each other, they meet and fall in love, each believing the other to be what she appears, though many a doubt is raised by replies which seem more befitting a maid than a youth. In a neighbouring forest range Diana and her chaste nymphs, amongst whom Cupid, out of pure mischief, lets fly his golden-headed arrows. At once the nymphs feel strange emotions within them, which quicken into uneasiness and longing at the sight of Gallathea and Phillida. But Diana detects the change, guesses at the cause, and promptly makes capture of Cupid. His wings clipped, his bow burnt, all his arrows broken, he is beaten and set to a task. Meanwhile the day of sacrifice has arrived and, in default of a better, a victim is found. But Neptune will have no second-best: what promises to be a tragedy changes to joy on the god's refusal to accept the proffered girl. However, the sacrifice is only postponed. Moreover the delay has given rise to a stricter search, which means increased peril for the disguised maidens. Fortunately intervention arrives before discovery. Venus, having learnt of Cupid's captivity, and not being powerful enough to effect his release unaided, invokes the help of Neptune against Diana. Instead of the use of force, however, a compact is arrived at; Cupid is released on condition that Neptune remits his claim upon a yearly victim. Thus are Gallathea and Phillida saved; but for a harder fate of hopeless love—for their constancy is irrevocable—were it not that Venus interposes with a promise that one of them shall be changed into a boy

in reality. Happy in this future they depart to prepare for marriage.—The thread of lower comedy introduces the customary three merry lads, but deals mainly with the fortunes of one of them, Raffe, who finds employment successively with an alchemist and an astronomer, only to find their promises out of all proportion to their performances. The wonderful prospects held out before him, and his disillusionment, afford scope for much sarcastic wit at the expense of quackery.

The pre-eminent feature of the play is the delicate handling of the romantic plot. We see the same fine brush at work as limned the picture of Apelles and Campaspe, while this time the artist has chosen a more harmonious background of meadow and woodland and river, of shepherds and forest nymphs. To Peele the priority in the use of pastoralism in drama must doubtless be assigned ; but the play of *Gallathea* loses none of its merit on that account. Coupled with a pretty ambiguity of sex, this pastoral setting completes the model from which *As You Like It* was yet to be moulded. Probably Peele, in his *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes*, preceded Lyly also in the introduction of sex-disguise, but his Neronis stirs up no serious difficulties by her appearance as a shepherd boy and a page, whereas in *Gallathea* the disguise is the core of the plot. To Lyly, therefore, may be given all the credit for the discovery of the dramatic value of this simple device. With his return to the mutual loves of ordinary human beings (for they are that, however extraordinary the conditions) he happily restores to his characters the naturalness which they enjoyed in the earlier play. The machinery of gods and goddesses is perhaps to be regretted, though euphuistic drama could hardly spare it ; but if we boldly swallow it as inevitable, the motive for the disguises at once becomes perfectly

reasonable, while the whole consequent behaviour of the girls is charged with most amusing and delightful *naïveté*. Less natural, of course, is the story of Cupid's mischief; yet mythology never gave to the stage a prettier piece of love-moralizing than is found in the scene of Cupid at his penal task of untying love-knots.—The very opening lines of the play announce the presence of Nature with her sunshine and grass and good substantial oaks.

Tyterus. The sun doth beat upon the plain fields; wherefore let us sit down, Gallathea, under this fair oak, by whose broad leaves being defended from the warm beams, we may enjoy the fresh air which softly breathes from Humber floods.

Gallathea. Father, you have devised well; and whilst our flock doth roam up and down this pleasant green, you shall recount to me, if it please you, for what cause this tree was dedicated unto Neptune, and why you have thus disguised me.

It is hard to do justice to such a play as this except by considerable generosity in the matter of quotations. Accordingly we offer three passages illustrative of the delicacy of our author's art.

(1)

[GALLATHEA *and* PHILLIDA, *in disguise, meet for the first time.*]

Gallathea (*at the close of a soliloquy*). But whist! here cometh a lad. I will learn of him how to behave myself.

Phillida (*entering*). I neither like my gate nor my garments, the one untoward, the other unfit, both unseemly. O Phillida! But yonder stayeth one, and therefore say nothing. But O, Phillida!

Gallathea. I perceive that boys are in as great disliking of themselves as maids; therefore, though I wear the apparel, I am glad I am not the person.

Phillida. It is a pretty boy and a fair; he might well have been a woman. But because he is not I am glad I am, for now, under the colour of my coat, I shall decipher the follies of their kind.

Gallathea. I would salute him, but I fear I should make a curtsey instead of a leg.

Phillida. If I durst trust my face as well as I do my habit I would spend some time to make pastime, for say what they will of a man's wit, it is no second thing to be a woman.

Gallathea. All the blood in my body would be in my face if he should ask me (as the question among men is common), 'Are you a maid?'

Phillida. Why stand I still? Boys should be bold. But here cometh a brave train that will spill all our talk. [*Enter* DIANA, *&c.*]

(2)

[GALLATHEA *and* PHILLIDA *endeavour to sound the affection of each other, but only succeed in raising disturbing doubts.*]

Phillida. Suppose I were a virgin (I blush in supposing myself one) and that under the habit of a boy were the person of a maid, if I should utter my affection with sighs, manifest my sweet love by my salt tears, and prove my loyalty unspotted and my griefs intolerable, would not then that fair face pity this true heart?

Gallathea. Admit that I were as you would have me suppose that you are, and that I should with entreaties, prayers, oaths, bribes, and whatever can be invented in love, desire your favour,—would you not yield?

Phillida. Tush! you come in with 'admit'!

Gallathea. And you with 'suppose'!

Phillida (*aside*). What doubtful speeches be these? I fear me he is as I am, a maiden.

Gallathea (*aside*). What dread riseth in my mind? I fear the boy to be as I am, a maiden.

Phillida (*aside*). Tush! it cannot be: his voice shows the contrary.

Gallathea (*aside*). Yet I do not think it—for he would then have blushed.

Phillida. Have you ever a sister?

Gallathea. If I had but one, my brother must needs have two; but, I pray, have you ever a one?

Phillida. My father had but one daughter, and therefore I could have no sister.

Gallathea (*aside*). Aye me! he is as I am, for his speeches be as mine are.

Phillida (*aside*). What shall I do? Either he is subtle, or my sex simple. . . . (*to Gallathea*) Come, let us into the grove and make much one of another, that cannot tell what to think one of another. [*Exeunt.*]

(3)

[Cupid, *in captivity, is set to his task by four nymphs.*]

Telusa. Come, sirrah! to your task! First you must undo all these lovers' knots, because you tied them.

Cupid. If they be true love knots 'tis unpossible to unknit them; if false, I never tied them.

Eurota. Make no excuse, but to it.

Cupid. Love knots are tied with eyes, and cannot be undone with hands; made fast with thoughts, and cannot be unloosed with fingers. Had Diana no task to set Cupid to but things impossible? I will to it.

Ramia. Why, how now? you tie the knots faster.

Cupid. I cannot choose: it goeth against my mind to make them loose.

Eurota. Let me see;—now 'tis unpossible to be undone.

Cupid. It is the true love knot of a woman's heart, therefore cannot be undone.

Ramia. That falls in sunder of itself.

Cupid. It was made of a man's thought, which will never hang together.

Larissa. You have undone that well.

Cupid. Aye, because it was never tied well.

Telusa. To the rest; for she will give you no rest. These two knots are finely untied!

Cupid. It was because I never tied them. The one was knit by Pluto, not Cupid, by money, not love; the other by force, not faith, by appointment, not affection.

Ramia. Why do you lay that knot aside?
Cupid. For death.
Telusa. Why?
Cupid. Because the knot was knit by faith, and must only be unknit of death.

The plot of *Mother Bombie* must be briefly sketched because it is the only one in which Lyly dispenses with the aid of classical tradition and mythology and attempts a Comedy of Intrigue. As such it has a certain historical interest.—The scene is Rochester, Kent. Memphio and Stellio, the fathers respectively of son Accius and daughter Silena, separately and craftily resolve to bring about by fraud the wedding of these two young people, for the reason that each knows his child to be weak-minded, and, believing his neighbour's child to be sound-witted and of good heritage, perceives that only deceit can accomplish the union. In this attempt to overreach each other they employ their servants, Dromio and Riscio, as principal agents. Not far away live two young people, Livia and Candius, whose mutual love is made unhappy by the opposition of their fathers, Prisius and Sperantius, since these latter covet rather their children's marriage with Accius and Silena. In pursuit of this other object these two countrymen send their servants, Lucio and Halfpenny, to spy out the land. By the ordinary chance of good comradeship the four servants meet and make known to each other their errands, when the opportunity of a mischievous entangling of the threads at once becomes apparent. Disguises are used, with the result that the loving couple, Livia and Candius, marry under the unconscious benisons of their parents. The trick being discovered, there is general trouble, especially at the exposure of the hitherto concealed imbecility of Accius and Silena; but a certain woman, Vicina, now

comes forward, with her two children, Maestius and Serena, to explain that the imbeciles are really her own offspring and that the son and daughter of Memphio and Stellio are Maestius and Serena. The willing alliance of these two brings the original plans to a happy conclusion. Mother Bombie herself is a fortune-teller to whom recourse is had at various times by the young folk, and whose oracular statements provide mysterious clues to the final events.

As a consequence of the meaner nature of its characters this play is less tainted with euphuism than the rest, while its dialogue is as lively as ever, the four servants finding in their masters excellent foils to practise their wit upon. Deception and cross purposes are conducted with much skill to their conclusion, though the elaborate balance of households rather oppresses one by its artificiality. As one of the earliest Comedies of Intrigue, if not actually the first, it presents possibilities in that direction which were eagerly developed by later writers. Thus again we observe the originality of the author preparing the way for his successors.

In summing up the contributions of Lyly to drama we naturally lay stress upon three points, namely, his creation of lively prose dialogue, his uplifting of comedy from the level of coarse humour and buffoonery to the region of high comedy and wit, and his painting of pure romantic love. We attach value, also, to his discovery of the dramatic possibilities of sex disguises, to his introduction of fairies upon the stage, to his persistence in the good fashion of interspersing songs amongst the scenes, and to his use of pastoralism as a background for romance. Nor may his efforts in Comedy of Intrigue be overlooked. On the other hand, we lament as a grievous failing his inability to draw real men and

women, or indeed to differentiate his characters at all except by gross caricature or the copying of traditional eccentricities. Sir Tophas and Diogenes we remember as distinct personalities only for their peculiar and very obvious traits: the rest of his characters either stay in our memory solely through the charm of particular scenes in which they take part, or fade from it altogether. As less regrettable faults, because hardly avoidable if euphuism was to bring its benefits, may be remembered the weakness of his plots (notably in *Campaspe*, *Sapho and Phao* and *Mydas*), the stilted, flowery talk that does duty for so many conversations, and the unreality brought in the train of his dearly-loved Greek mythology. Not unfittingly we may conclude our criticism of his plays with his own description of his art, given in the first prologue to *Sapho and Phao*.

Our intent was at this time to move inward delight, not outward lightness, and to breed (if it might be) soft smiling, not loud laughing; knowing it to the wise to be as great pleasure to hear counsel mixed with wit, as to the foolish to have sport mingled with rudeness. They were banished the theatre of Athens, and from Rome hissed, that brought parasites on the stage with apish actions, or fools with uncivil habits, or courtesans with immodest words. We have endeavoured to be as far from unseemly speeches, to make your ears glow, as we hope you will be free from unkind reports, to make our cheeks blush.

Unlike Lyly, Robert Greene is the dramatizer of actions rather than speeches. Primarily a writer of romances, he carries the same principle with him to the stage, providing a throng of characters and an abundance of incident, with rapid transition from place to place, regardless of time and the technicalities of acts and

scenes. The result is a continuous flow of pictures, in subject darting about from one set of characters to another lest any section of the narrative drag behind the rest, hardly ever dull yet rarely impressive, bearing the complexity of many issues to its appointed end in general content. This is plot-structure in its elementary yet ambitious form: an abounding wealth of material is condensed within the limits of a play, but its arrangement reveals no attempt at a gradual and subtle evolution of events to a climax. It succeeds in maintaining interest by its variety, leaving the pleased spectator with the sense of having looked on at a number of very entertaining scenes. Unfortunately the bustle of action invites superficiality of treatment: the end is attained by the use of bold splashes of colour rather than by accurate drawing. Spaniards, Italians, Turks, Moors fill the stage like a pageant; in the best known play, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, magicians perform wonders, country squires kill each other for love, prince and fool exchange places, simple folk go a-fairing, kings pay state visits, devils fly off with people, all to hold the eye by their rapidly interchanging diversity; but few of them pause to be painted in detail as individuals. Only the women steal from the author's gift-box a few qualities not hackneyed by other writers, and, decked in these, make rich return by bestowing upon their master a reputation which no other part of his work could have won for him.

Probably we have not all the plays that Greene wrote. Evidence points to the loss of his earlier ones. Those preserved are (the order is approximately that in which they were written)—*Alphonsus, King of Arragon, A Looking-Glass for London and England, Orlando Furioso, Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, James the Fourth,* and *George-a-Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield.* The authorship of the last

is not certain, and that of the second was shared with Lodge. With regard to the dates it is hardly safe to be more definite than to allot them to the period 1587–92. In all we see a preference for ready-made stories. The writer rarely invents a plot, choosing instead to dramatize the history, romance, epic or ballad of another. Where he does invent, as in the love plot in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, the result is notable. Blank verse is his medium, but in all except the first prose is freely used for the speech of the uncultured persons. Most of the verse is quite good, modelled on the form of Marlowe's ; it is commonly least satisfactory where the imitation is most deliberate. The prose, adopted from Lyly's 'servants' and 'pages', not from his courtly 'goddesses', is clear and vigorous. Euphuism asserts itself occasionally in the verse, and the affectation of scholarship, customary in that day, is responsible for a superabundance of classical allusions in unexpected places.

Since Greene was at first much under the influence of Marlowe it is necessary to say something here of that dramatist's work. For a full consideration of the essential qualities of Marlowe the reader must be asked to wait. Perhaps he has already discovered them in the ordinary course of his reading, for Marlowe is too widely known to need introduction through any text-book. Briefly, *Tamburlaine*—the play which made the greatest impression on the playwrights of its time—may be described as a magniloquent account of the career of a world-conqueror whose resistless triumph over kingdoms and potentates, signalized by acts of monstrous insolence, provides excuse for outbursts of extravagant vainglory. Such a description is intended to indicate the traditional Marlowesque qualities : it is a very inadequate criticism of the play as a whole. This kind of loud, richly coloured

drama leapt into instant popularity, and it was in direct imitation of it that Greene wrote the first of the plays credited to him.

Alphonsus, King of Arragon, shares with *James the Fourth* the distinction of a division into five acts, and adheres throughout to blank verse. Alphonsus, the conqueror, begins his career as an exiled claimant to the throne of Arragon. Fighting as a common soldier, under an agreement that he shall hold all he wins, he slays the Spanish usurper in battle and at once demands the crown. On this being granted him he as promptly turns upon the donor to claim from him feudal homage. This, however, can only be insisted upon by force, and war ensues, with complete overthrow of his enemies. Grandly bestowing upon his three chief supporters all his present conquests, namely, the thrones of Arragon, Naples and Milan, as too trifling for himself, Alphonsus follows his opponents to their refuge at the court of Amurack, the great Turk. Through a misleading oracle of Mahomet they rashly engage in battle without their ally and are slain. With their heads impaled at the corners of his canopy Alphonsus now confronts Amurack, just such another bold and arrogant conqueror as himself. In the conflict that follows he is temporarily put to flight by Amurack's daughter, Iphigena, and her band of Amazons; but, smitten with sudden love, he turns to offer his hand and heart on the battlefield. She spurns his overtures, and a very ungallant hand-to-hand combat follows, in which he proves victor and drives his lovely foe to flight in her turn. The conquest is complete, and with all his enemies captives Alphonsus carries things with a high hand, threatening to add Amurack's head to those on his canopy unless that monarch consent to his marriage with Iphigena. Fortunately Alphonsus's old father, who

has gained entrance in a pilgrim's garb, intervenes with parental remonstrance and by the exercise of a little tact brings about both the marriage and general happiness.

A noticeable feature, which shows the closeness of the imitation, is the absence of all intentionally humorous scenes, in spite of Greene's very considerable natural aptitude for comic by-play. Everywhere the influence of *Tamburlaine* is markedly visible, in the subject, in particular scenes, in such staging as the gruesome canopy, and above all in the incessant bombast. Euphuism also is more pronounced than in his other plays: Venus recites the prologues to the acts. All the male characters are drawn on the same pattern, in differing degrees according to their condition, and the two women, Iphigena and her mother, Fausta, are without attractive qualities. Marlowe, as we know, rarely expended any care on his female characters; Greene, however, proved capable in his later, independent plays, of very different work. Utter disregard of normal conceptions of time and distance produces occasional confusion in the reader's mind as to his supposed imaginary whereabouts. From almost every point of view, then, the play is a poor production. A redeeming trait is the occasional vigour of the verse. For an illustrative passage one may turn to the meeting of Alphonsus and Amurack:

Amurack. Why, proud Alphonsus, think'st thou Amurack,
Whose mighty force doth terrify the gods,
Can e'er be found to turn his heels and fly
Away for fear from such a boy as thou?
No, no! Although that Mars this mickle while
Hath fortified thy weak and feeble arm,
And Fortune oft hath view'd with friendly face
Thy armies marching victors from the field,
Yet at the presence of high Amurack

Fortune shall change, and Mars, that god of might,
Shall succour me, and leave Alphonsus quite.
Alphonsus. Pagan, I say, thou greatly art deceiv'd.
I clap up Fortune in a cage of gold,
To make her turn her wheel as I think best;
And as for Mars, whom you do say will change,
He moping sits behind the kitchen door,
Prest[1] at command of every scullion's mouth,
Who dares not stir, nor once to move a whit,
For fear Alphonsus then should stomach[2] it.

A Looking-Glass for London and England shows less bondage to *Tamburlaine*, but falls into a worse error by a recurrence to the deliberate didacticism of the old Moralities. The lessons for London, drawn from the sins of Nineveh, are formally and piously announced by the prophets Oseas and Jonas after the exposure of each offence. Devoid of any proper plot, the play merely brings together various incidents to exhibit such social evils as usury, legal corruption, filial ingratitude, friction between master and servant. Intermingled, with only the slightest connexion, are the widely different stories of King Rasni's amours, of the thirsty career of a drunken blacksmith, and of the prophet Jonah—his disobedience, strange sea-journey, mission in Nineveh and subsequent ill-temper being set forth in full. Vainglorious Rasni talks like Alphonsus, and his ladies are even less charming than Iphigena. Ramilia boasts as outrageously as her brother, and is only prevented by sudden death from an incestuous union with him; Alvida, after poisoning her first husband to secure Rasni, shamelessly attempts to woo the King of Cilicia. Quite the most successful character, perhaps the most amusing of all Greene's clowns, is Adam, the blacksmith. His loyal defence of

[1] ready. [2] resent.

his trade against derogatory aspersions, his rare drunkenness, his detection and beating of the practical joker who comes disguised as a devil to carry him off like a Vice on his back, his tactful replenishings of his cup at the king's table, and his dissemblings to avoid being discovered in possession of food during the fast are most entertaining. Poor fellow, he ends on the gallows, but goes to his death with a stout heart and a full stomach. No better example is needed of the prose which Greene puts into the mouths of his low characters than that which Adam uses. The following incident occurs during the fast proclaimed by Rasni after Jonah's denunciations:

Adam (*alone*). Well, Goodman Jonas, I would you had never come from Jewry to this country; you have made me look like a lean rib of roast beef, or like the picture of Lent painted upon a red-herring-cob. Alas, masters, we are commanded by the proclamation to fast and pray! By my faith, I could prettily so-so away with praying; but for fasting, why, 'tis so contrary to my nature that I had rather suffer a short hanging than a long fasting. Mark me, the words be these, 'Thou shalt take no manner of food for so many days'. I had as lief he should have said, 'Thou shalt hang thyself for so many days'. And yet, in faith, I need not find fault with the proclamation, for I have a buttery and a pantry and a kitchen about me; for proof, *ecce signum*! This right slop (*leg of his garments*) is my pantry—behold a manchet [*Draws it out*]; this place is my kitchen, for, lo, a piece of beef [*Draws it out*]: O, let me repeat that sweet word again! for, lo, a piece of beef! This is my buttery; for see, see, my friends, to my great joy, a bottle of beer [*Draws it out*]. Thus, alas, I make shift to wear out this fasting; I drive away the time. But there go searchers about to seek if any man breaks the king's command. O, here they be; in with your victuals, Adam. [*Puts them back into his slops. Enter two* Searchers.]

First Searcher. How duly the men of Nineveh keep the proclamation! how are they armed to repentance! We

have searched through the whole city, and have not as yet found one that breaks the fast.

Second Searcher. The sign of the more grace.—But stay! here sits one, methinks, at his prayers; let us see who it is.

First S. 'Tis Adam, the smith's man.—How now, Adam!

Adam. Trouble me not; 'Thou shalt take no manner of food, but fast and pray.'

First S. How devoutly he sits at his orisons! But stay, methinks I feel a smell of some meat or bread about him.

Second S. So thinks me too.—You, sirrah, what victuals have you about you?

Adam. Victuals! O horrible blasphemy! Hinder me not of my prayer, nor drive me not into a choler. Victuals! why, heardest thou not the sentence, 'Thou shalt take no food, but fast and pray'?

Second S. Truth, so it should be; but methinks I smell meat about thee.

Adam. About me, my friends! these words are actions in the case. About me! No, no! hang those gluttons that cannot fast and pray.

First S. Well, for all your words, we must search you.

Adam. Search me! Take heed what you do: my hose are my castles; 'tis burglary if you break ope a slop; no officer must lift up an iron hatch; take heed, my slops are iron. [*They search* Adam.]

Second S. O villain!—See how he hath gotten victuals, bread, beef, and beer, where the king commanded upon pain of death none should eat for so many days!

Orlando Furioso, a dramatized version of an incident in Ariosto's poem, need not delay us long. It is the story of Orlando's madness (due to jealousy) and the sufferings of innocent, patient Angelica. In this heroine we have the first of several pictures from the author's hand of a gentle, constant, ill-used maiden, but she is very little seen. Most of the play is taken up with warfare, secret

enmities, and Orlando's madness. The evil genius, Sacripant, may be the first, as Iago is the greatest, of that school of villains whose treachery finds expression in the deliberate undermining of true love by forged proofs of infidelity. There is less rodomontade than in the previous plays, but again we have to record an absence of humour. In the following lines Orlando is meditating on his love:

Fair queen of love, thou mistress of delight,
Thou gladsome lamp that wait'st on Phoebe's train,
Spreading thy kindness through the jarring orbs
That, in their union, praise thy lasting powers;
Thou that hast stay'd the fiery Phlegon's course,
And mad'st the coachman of the glorious wain
To droop, in view of Daphne's excellence;
Fair pride of morn, sweet beauty of the even,
Look on Orlando languishing in love.
Sweet solitary groves, whereas the Nymphs
With pleasance laugh to see the Satyrs play,
Witness Orlando's faith unto his love.
Tread she these lawnds, kind Flora, boast thy pride:
Seek she for shade, spread, cedars, for her sake:
Fair Flora, make her couch amidst thy flowers:
Sweet crystal springs,
Wash ye with roses when she longs to drink.
Ah, thought, my heaven! ah, heaven, that knows my thought!
Smile, joy in her that my content hath wrought.

Hitherto Greene had yielded to the popular demand for plays of the *Tamburlaine* class, full of oriental colour and martial sound, with titanic heroes and a generous supply of kings, queens, and great captains: no less than twenty crowned heads compete for places on the list of dramatis personae in his first three plays. The character of Angelica, however, and stray touches of pastoralism in the last play, hint at an impending change. The author's mind,

tired of subservience, was beginning to trace out for itself new paths, leading him from camps to the fresh countryside. To the end Greene retained his kings, possibly for their spectacular effect. But he abandoned warfare as a theme.

Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay was written under the new inspiration. We have already referred to the motley nature of this drama. No other of the writer's plays exhibits so many and such rapid changes of scene, some situations actually demanding the presentation of two scenes at the same time. In spite of this the different sections of the story remain tolerably clear as we proceed, and the interest never flags for longer than the brief minutes when prosy Oxford dons talk learnedly. Four groups of characters attract attention in turn; the young noblemen and Margaret, the three kings and the Spanish princess, the country yokels and squires, and the magicians. By careful interweaving all four groups are related to one another and none but the Margaret plot is permitted to develop any complexity. In this way something like unity is attained.

The play begins with Prince Edward in love with the country girl, Margaret of Fressingfield. He, Earl Lacy, and others have taken refreshment at her father's farm after a hunt, and the prince has fallen a captive to her beauty and simplicity. It is decided that a double attack must be made upon her heart, Prince Edward invoking the magic aid of Bacon, while Lacy stays behind to woo her on his behalf. Lacy's part is not easy. Disguised as a farmer he meets Margaret at a village fair and does his best to plead for 'the courtier all in green', only to be himself pierced by the arrow that struck his prince. When, therefore, Prince Edward arrives at the friar's cell and peers into his marvellous crystal, he sees Lacy and

Margaret exchanging declarations of love, with Friar Bungay standing by ready to wed them. The power of Friar Bacon prevents the ceremony by whisking his cowled brother away, and the furious prince hurries back to Fressingfield. He is resolved to slay Lacy; nor does that remorseful earl ask for other treatment; Margaret, however, offers so brave and noble a defence of her lover, taking all blame upon herself and avowing that his death will be instantly followed by her own, that at length more generous impulses rise in the royal breast, and instead of death a blessing is bestowed. Together the prince and the earl repair to Oxford to meet the King, the Emperor of Germany, the King of Castile, and the latter's daughter, Elinor, who is to be Prince Edward's wife. In their absence other admirers appear upon the scene, a squire and a farmer being rivals for Margaret's hand. Quarrelling over the matter, they put it to the test of a duel and kill each other. By an unhappy coincidence their absent sons are looking into Bacon's magic crystal at that very time, and, seeing the fatal consequences of the conflict, turn their weapons hastily against each other, with the result that their fathers' fate becomes theirs. Margaret remains loyal to Lacy, but mischief prompts the latter to send her one hundred pounds and a letter of dismissal on the plea of a wealthier match being necessary for him. Unhappy Margaret, rejecting the money, prepares to enter a convent. Fortunately Lacy himself comes down to set matters in order for their marriage before she has taken the vows, and though his second wooing is done in a very peremptory, cavalier fashion, she returns to his arms. Their wedding is celebrated on the same day as that of Prince Edward and Elinor of Castile.—Independent of this romance, but linked to it through the person of Prince Edward, are the

visit of the kings to Oxford, the wonder-workings of Friar Bacon, and the mischievous fooling of such light-headed persons as the king's jester, Ralph Simnell, and the friar's servant, Miles. Friar Bacon's power is exercised in the spiriting hither and thither of desirable and undesirable folk, the most notable victim being a much vaunted and self-confident German magician who has been brought over by the emperor to outshine his English rivals. There is some fun when Miles is set to watch for the first utterance of the mysterious brazen head, and, delaying to wake his master, lets the supreme moment pass unused. The curses which this mistake calls upon him from Friar Bacon bring about his ultimate removal to hell on a devil's back.

Here then is a slight but charming story of romance, supported through the length of a whole play by all the adventitious aids which Greene can command. One of the minor characters, Ralph Simnell, invites passing notice as the rough sketch of a type which Shakespeare afterwards perfected, the Court Fool: his jesting questions and answers may be compared with those of Feste in *Twelfth Night*. Disguised as the prince, to conceal the identity of the real prince at Oxford, he is served by the merry nobles and proves himself humorously unprincely. But that which has given most fame to the author is the love-plot. The Fressingfield scenes bring upon the stage a direct picture of simple country life—of a dairy-maid among her cheeses, butter and cream, and of a country fair with farm-lads eager to buy fairings for their lassies. Unfortunately, under the influence of the fashionable affectation, Margaret is unusually learned in Greek mythology, citing Jove, Danaë, Phoebus, Latona and Mercury within the compass of a bare five lines. The indebtedness of Greene to Lyly's *Campaspe* for the idea of

a simple love romance as plot has been acknowledged. In the use of pastoralism, too, he borrowed a hint, perhaps, from Peele. Yet, when both debts have been allowed, the reader of Greene's comedy is still left with the conviction that his author had the secret of it all in himself. He had a hint from others, but he needed no more.

Our quotations illustrate the story of Margaret.

(1)

[*Enter* Prince Edward *malcontented, with* Lacy, Warren, *&c.*]

Lacy. Why looks my lord like to a troubled sky
When heaven's bright shine is shadow'd with a fog?
Alate we ran the deer, and through the lawnds
Stripp'd with our nags the lofty frolic bucks
That scudded 'fore the teasers like the wind:
Ne'er was the deer of merry Fressingfield
So lustily pull'd down by jolly mates,
Nor shar'd the farmers such fat venison,
So frankly dealt, this hundred years before;
Nor have
I seen my lord more frolic in the chase,—
And now chang'd to a melancholy dump.

Warren. After the prince got to the Keeper's lodge,
And had been jocund in the house awhile,
Tossing off ale and milk in country cans,
Whether it was the country's sweet content,
Or else the bonny damsel fill'd us drink
That seem'd so stately in her stammel red,
Or that a qualm did cross his stomach then,
But straight he fell into his passions.

. . . . . .

P. Edward. Tell me, Ned Lacy, didst thou mark the maid,
How lovely in her country-weeds she look'd?
A bonnier wench all Suffolk cannot yield:
All Suffolk! nay, all England holds none such. . . .
Whenas she swept like Venus through the house,

And in her shape fast folded up my thoughts,
Into the milk-house went I with the maid,
And there amongst the cream-bowls she did shine
As Pallas 'mongst her princely huswifery:
She turn'd her smock over her lily arms
And div'd them into milk to run her cheese;
But whiter than the milk her crystal skin,
Checkéd with lines of azure, made her blush
That art or nature durst bring for compare.

(2)

[PRINCE EDWARD *stands with his poniard in his hand*: LACY *and* MARGARET.]

Margaret. 'Twas I, my lord, not Lacy stept awry:
For oft he su'd and courted for yourself,
And still woo'd for the courtier all in green;
But I, whom fancy made but over-fond,
Pleaded myself with looks as if I lov'd;
I fed mine eye with gazing on his face,
And still bewitch'd lov'd Lacy with my looks;
My heart with sighs, mine eyes pleaded with tears,
My face held pity and content at once,
And more I could not cipher-out by signs
But that I lov'd Lord Lacy with my heart. . . .
What hopes the prince to gain by Lacy's death?

P. Edward. To end the loves 'twixt him and Margaret.

Margaret. Why, thinks King Henry's son that Margaret's love
Hangs in th' uncertain balance of proud time?
That death shall make a discord of our thoughts?
No, stab the earl, and, 'fore the morning sun
Shall vaunt him thrice over the lofty east,
Margaret will meet her Lacy in the heavens.

James the Fourth is not, as the title seems to indicate, a chronicle history play. It is the story of that king's love for Ida, the daughter of the Countess of Arran, and of the consequent unhappiness of his young queen, Dorothea. Technically it is Greene's most perfect play,

being carefully divided into acts and scenes, and containing a plot ample enough to dispense with much of that extraneous matter which obscured his former plays. An amusing stratum of comic by-play underlies the main story without interfering with it. Nevertheless the central details are unattractive, presenting intrigue rather than romance, so that the effect is less pleasing than that of the previous comedy.

In the hour of the Scottish monarch's union with Dorothea, daughter of the English king, his wandering eyes fall upon and become enamoured of Ida, who is standing by amongst the ladies of the court. With dissembling lips he bids farewell to his new father-in-law; then, alone, soliloquizes on his own wretchedness. Ateukin, a poor, unscrupulous and ambitious courtier, overhears him and offers his services, which are accepted. Ateukin, accordingly, makes overtures to Ida, but without success. Returning, he persuades the king to sanction the murder of his queen, to be accomplished by the French hireling, Jaques. By accident the warrant for her death comes into the possession of a friend of hers, who prevails upon her to flee into hiding, disguised as a man and accompanied by her dwarf. They are followed, however, by Jaques, who, after stabbing her, returns to announce the news to Ateukin. The latter informs the king and at once sets out to secure Ida's acceptance of her royal suitor, only to find her already married to a worthy knight, Eustace. Aware of the consequences to himself of failure he flees the country. Meanwhile Queen Dorothea, who was not mortally wounded, is successfully tended in a hospitable castle, her disguise remaining undiscovered. This produces a temporary difficulty, the lady of the castle falling in love with her knightly patient; but that trouble is soon

removed, without leaving any harm behind. The King of England invades Scotland on behalf of his ill-used daughter; a reward is offered for her recovery; and on the eve of battle she appears as a peacemaker. Happiness crowns the story.

The interest and value of the play lies in the two characters, Ida and Dorothea. In the outline given above small space is assigned to the former because her part is almost entirely confined to minor scenes in which she and her mother talk together over their fancy-work, and Eustace pays successful court for her hand. But by her purity and maidenly reserve she merits our attention. It is a pity that her virtue makes her rather dull and prosaic. Dorothea's adventures in disguise show Greene profiting perhaps by the example of Peele, although the loss of so many contemporary plays warns us against naming models too definitely. The popularity of disguised girls in later drama and their appearance in the works of Peele, Lyly and Greene, point to their having been early accepted as favourites whenever an author sought for an easy addition to the entanglement of his plot. Faithful love in the face of desertion and cruelty is the dominant note in Dorothea's character as it was in that of Angelica.—Slipper and Nano, two dwarf brothers, engaged as attendants respectively on Ateukin and Queen Dorothea, provide most of the humour. More worthy of note are Oberon, King of the Fairies, and Bohan, the embittered Scotch recluse, who together provide an Induction to the play. We are reminded of the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*. Ben Jonson also makes use of this device. In this particular Induction the story of James the Fourth is supposed to be played before Oberon to illustrate the reason of Bohan's disgust with the world; but these two persons recur several times to round off

the acts with fairy dances and dumb shows, which have no reference to the main play. In Greene's verse we discover a half-hearted return to rhyme, passages in it, and even odd couplets, being interspersed plentifully through his blank verse.

To make amends for our slight notice of Ida in the outline of the play we select our illustration from a scene in that lady's home.

[*The* Countess of Arran *and* Ida *discovered in their porch, sitting at work.*]

Countess. Fair Ida, might you choose the greatest good,
Midst all the world in blessings that abound,
Wherein, my daughter, should your liking be?
Ida. Not in delights, or pomp, or majesty.
Countess. And why?
Ida. Since these are means to draw the mind
From perfect good, and make true judgment blind.
Countess. Might you have wealth and Fortune's richest store?
Ida. Yet would I, might I choose, be honest-poor:
For she that sits at Fortune's feet a-low
Is sure she shall not taste a further woe,
But those that prank on top of Fortune's ball
Still fear a change, and, fearing, catch a fall.
Countess. Tut, foolish maid, each one contemneth need.
Ida. Good reason why, they know not good indeed.
Countess. Many, marry, then, on whom distress doth lour.
Ida. Yes, they that virtue deem an honest dower.
Madam, by right this world I may compare
Unto my work, wherein with heedful care
The heavenly workman plants with curious hand,
As I with needle draw each thing on land,
Even as he list: some men like to the rose
Are fashion'd fresh; some in their stalks do close,
And, born, do sudden die; some are but weeds,
And yet from them a secret good proceeds:

I with my needle, if I please, may blot
The fairest rose within my cambric plot;
God with a beck can change each worldly thing,
The poor to rich, the beggar to the king.
What, then, hath man wherein he well may boast,
Since by a beck he lives, a lour is lost?
Countess. Peace, Ida, here are strangers near at hand.

When Greene surrendered the attractions of sanguinary warfare and the panoplied splendour of conquerors to treat of the pursuit of love in peace he descended from the exclusive ranks of high-born lords and ladies to the company of simple working folk, presenting a farmer's daughter, winsome, loving and virtuous, and worthy to become the wife of an earl. This aspect of the Fressingfield romance must have had a special appeal for those of his audiences who stood outside the pale of wealth and aristocracy. An earlier bid for their applause has been seen in the figure of the blacksmith, Adam, whose sturdy defence of his trade was referred to when we discussed *A Looking-Glass for London and England*. If Greene wrote *George-a-Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield*, and there is a strong probability that he did, he carried forward the glorification of the lower classes, in this play, to its furthest point.

It is a hearty yeoman play; the time represented, the reign of one of the Edwards. The plot revolves about the rebellion of an Earl of Kendal. The principal figure is just such a stout typical hero of a countryside as Robin Hood himself, but more law-abiding. His rough honest loyalty is up in arms at once on the least disrespect to the crown. When Sir Nicholas Mannering, on behalf of the rebel Earl of Kendal, insolently demands a contribution of provisions from Wakefield, George tears up his commission and makes him swallow the three seals. By

craft—being disguised as a hermit-seer—he takes prisoner Kendal and another nobleman, and so single-handed crushes the rebellion. About the same time the ally of Kendal, James of Scotland, is captured by another country hero, Musgrove, a veteran of great renown but no less in age than 'five score and three'. Thus the yeomen prove their superiority over traitor nobles. But George has other affairs to manage. Fair Bettris, who runs away from a disagreeable father to join him, suddenly refuses to marry him without her father's consent, not easily obtainable in the circumstances. However a trick overcomes that difficulty too in the end. Meanwhile the fame of the lass excites the rival jealousy of Maid Marian, who insists on Robin Hood's challenging George's supremacy. In three single fights Robin's two comrades, Scarlet and Much, are overthrown and Robin himself is driven to call a halt: his identity being discovered, George treats him with great honour. In accordance with former practices kings are brought upon the scene. The King of Scotland, as we have seen, is captured by Musgrove. King Edward of England and his nobles, in disguise, visit Yorkshire to see the redoubtable George who has crushed the king's rebels. An ancient custom of 'vailing (*trailing*) the staff' through Bradford, or, as an alternative, fighting the shoemakers of that town, produces a laughable episode. The king at first 'vails' at discretion, but is compelled by George and Robin to adopt a bolder attitude; George then beats all the shoemakers, who, at the finish, however, recognizing him, award him a hearty welcome. All are brought to their knees at the revelation of the king's identity, but Edward is merry over the affair, offering to dub George a knight. This distinction the latter begs to be allowed to refuse, saying,

— Let me live and die a yeoman still;
So was my father, so must live his son.
For 'tis more credit to men of base degree
To do great deeds, than men of dignity.

Closing the play the king pays high honour to the worshipful guild of shoemakers.

And for the ancient custom of *Vail staff*,
Keep it still, claim privilege from me:
If any ask a reason why or how,
Say, English Edward vail'd his staff to you.

An amount of careless irregularity unusual with Greene is displayed in the verse, pointing to hasty production. But the whole play is humorous, vigorous and healthy. George's man, Jenkin, a dull-witted, faint-hearted fellow, is the clown. There is an abundance of incident, though not the complexity of *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. We have noticed the historical atmosphere repeated from that play and from *James the Fourth*. With regard to the love-plot, Bettris has only a small part, but in her preference for George above a nobleman who comes wooing her, and in her simple rank, she is quite like Margaret. Thus, when her titled admirer offers himself, she sings,

I care not for earl, nor yet for knight,
Nor baron that is so bold;
For George-a-Greene, the merry Pinner,
He hath my heart in hold.

We select our main extract from the scene in which George, the loyal yeoman, defies Sir Nicholas Mannering, the traitorous noble, and flouts his commission. Those present include the local Justice and an assembly of the citizens. George has just pushed his way to the front.

Mannering (*to Justice*). See you these seals? before you pass the town
I will have all things my lord doth want,
In spite of you.
George. Proud dapper Jack, vail bonnet to the bench
That represents the person of the king,
Or, sirrah, I'll lay thy head before thy feet.
Mannering. Why, who art thou?
George. Why, I am George-a-Greene,
True liegeman to my king,
Who scorns that men of such esteem as these
Should brook the braves of any traitorous squire.
You of the bench, and you, my fellow-friends,
Neighbours, we subjects all unto the king,
We are English born, and therefore Edward's friends,
Vow'd unto him even in our mothers' womb,
Our minds to God, our hearts unto our king;
Our wealth, our homage, and our carcasses
Be all King Edward's. Then, sirrah, we
Have nothing left for traitors but our swords,
Whetted to bathe them in your bloods, and die
'Gainst you, before we send you any victuals.

George-a-Greene brings us to the end of Greene's dramatic work. The qualities of that work have been pointed out as they occurred, but it may be as well to recapitulate them in a final paragraph. Foremost of all will stand the crowded medley of his plots, filling the stage with an amount of incident and action which is in striking contrast to Lyly's conversations and monologues. The public appetite for complex plots was stimulated, but unfortunately very little progress was made in the art of orderly dramatic arrangement and evolution. Indeed, this feature of Greene's plays may be thought to have been almost as much a loss as a gain to drama. Its popularity licensed an indifference on the part of lesser authors to clarity and restraint, and encouraged the development of those dual plots which are to be found, connected by the flimsiest

bonds, in the works of such men as Dekker and Heywood. To the same influence may be traced Shakespeare's frequent but skilful use of subordinate plots. For the second quality of Greene's work we name the charm and purity of his romantic conceptions. The fresh air of his pastoralism, the virtue, constancy and patience of his heroines, entitle him to an honourable position among the writers who have reached success by this path. Thirdly, but of equal importance, is his sympathetic presentment of men and women of the middle and lower classes; he was here an innovator, and some of our most pathetic dramas may be traced ultimately to his example. His admirable 'low comedy' scenes, on the other hand, though they prove their author to have been gifted with considerable humour, merely continued the practice of Lyly, as his rant and noisy warfare echoed the thunder of Marlowe. The general soundness, even occasional excellence, of his verse and prose must be allowed to be largely his own.

George Peele has left behind him a name associated with sweetness of versification and graceful pastoralism. When, however, we try to recall other features of his work, the men and women of his creation, or scenes from his plots, we find our memory strangely indistinct. It is not easy at first to see why; but probably the cause is in his lack of strong individuality. He had not the gift of his greater contemporaries of throwing vitality into his work. When they took up an old story they entered into possession of it, creating fresh scenes and introducing new and effective actors; above all, in their most successful productions, they grasped the necessity of having one or more clearly defined figures, which, by their strongly human appeal, or their exaggerated traits, should

grip the attention of the spectators with unforgettable force. Marlowe was the supreme master of this art; Diogenes, Sir Tophas, Margaret of Fressingfield, Queen Dorothea, and others are examples of what Lyly and Greene could do. The same vitality is visible in their best known plots and scenes. Apelles loved Campaspe long ago in the pages of history, and was forgotten there; Lyly made him woo and win her again, and now their home is for ever between the covers of his little volume. Greene tells the story of Earl Lacy's love for Margaret, and the details of that delightfully human romance return to us whenever his name is mentioned. But what characters or scenes spring up to proclaim Peele's authorship? Ho dramatized the narrative of Absalom's rebellion, and, as soon as the end of the play is reached, the theme, with the possible exception of the first scene, slips back, in our minds, into its old biblical setting; it belongs to the writer of *The Book of Samuel*, not to Peele. He wrote a Marlowesque play, similar to Greene's *Alphonsus, King of Arragon*, but failed to create out of his several leaders a single dominant figure to compare with Alphonsus. The same might be said of his *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes* and his *Edward the First*; and his *Old Wives' Tale* is a by-word for confusion. Only in the sub-plot of *The Arraignment of Paris* does he present a character that may be said to owe its permanence in English literature to him. The first love of Paris is there told so prettily, with so pathetic a presentation of the heart-broken Oenone, that at once the deserted maiden won a place in English hearts and minds; Tennyson's poem is an exquisite wreath laid at the foot of the monument raised by Peele to her memory. On the other hand, the main plot, retelling the old legend of the Apple of Discord, is painted in the same neutral tints as coloured his other plays.

Such slight distinction as it may have it draws from association with a matter of extraneous interest, the conversion of the action into an elaborate compliment to Queen Elizabeth; the goddesses, and Paris in his relation to them, gain nothing at his hands, while Hobbinol, Diggon and Thenot are the dullest of shepherds. Unapt for witty or clownish dialogue, Peele rarely attempts, as Lyly and Greene did, to give fresh piquancy to an old story by the addition of subordinate humorous episodes; when he does, as in *Edward the First*, the result can hardly be termed a success.

Peele's eminence as a dramatist, then, must be sought for in the two features of his work mentioned in our opening sentence, namely, sweetness of versification and graceful pastoralism. Of these the latter is found only in a single play, *The Arraignment of Paris*, and is one of the few products of the author's originality. Lyly was possibly indebted to it for the background and minor figures of certain scenes in *Gallathea*, and Greene may have owed something to its influence. Certainly neither dramatist ever equalled its delicate descriptions of passive Nature.[1] The preponderance of mythology, however, the dearth of real human beings, the unnaturalness permitted to invade nature—so that even the flowers are grouped, as in an absurd parterre, to represent the forms of goddesses—make Peele's pastoralism, despite the undeniable charm of many passages, inferior to Greene's representation of English country life.

Turning next to his verse, we recognize that it is here above all that his excellence is to be found. Nevertheless a word of caution is needed. So many of his readers have been charmed by his verse that it seems almost a pity to remind them that he wrote more than two

[1] See Flora's second speech, Act I, Sc. I.

plays, and that the same brain that composed the favourite passages in *David and Bethsabe* also produced quantities of very indifferent poetry in other dramas. *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes* is written in tedious alliterative heptameters. From *Edward the First* the most ardent admirer of Peele would be puzzled to find half a dozen speeches meriting quotation. The verse of *The Battle of Alcazar* is in all points similar to that of Greene's Marlowesque plays, imitating and falling short of the same model. In fact Peele's reputation as a versifier rests almost entirely on the contents of those two plays which most students of his work read, *The Arraignment of Paris* and *David and Bethsabe*. Of the first it may be said boldly, without fear of contradiction, that, considered metrically, the verse is unsuited to ordinary drama. The arbitrary and constantly changing use of heroic couplet, blank verse (pentameters), rhyming heptameters, alternate heptameters and hexameters rhyming together, and the swift transition from one form to another in the same speech, possibly help towards the lyrical effect aimed at; the nature of the plot licenses a deviation from the ordinary dramatic rules; but such metric irresponsibility would be out of place in any ordinary play. There is a rare daintiness in some of the lines; they are truly poetic; but we must remember that goddesses and the legendary dwellers about Mount Ida may be permitted to speak in a language which would be condemned as an affectation among folk of commoner clay. Setting these objections aside—though they are important, as demonstrating the limited amount of Peele's widely praised dramatic verse—we may offer one general criticism of the verse of both plays. The best lines and passages charm us by their exquisite finish, their seductive rhythm and imagery, not by their thought. Sometimes the warm

glow of his patriotism, which was his most sincere emotion, inspired verses that move us; noble lines will be found in *Edward the First* and *The Battle of Alcazar*, as well as in the better known conclusion to *The Arraignment of Paris*. But we may look in vain through his dramas for lines like those quoted on an earlier page from *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (beginning, 'Why, thinks King Henry's son'), or these, placed in the mouth of Queen Dorothea, repudiating the idea of revenge:

> As if they kill not me, who with him fight!
> As if his breast be touch'd, I am not wounded!
> As if he wail'd, my joys were not confounded!
> We are one heart, though rent by hate in twain;
> One soul, one essence doth our weal contain:
> What, then, can conquer him, that kills not me?[1]

For the sake of comparison with these two passages let us quote the famous piece from *David and Bethsabe*.

> Now comes my lover tripping like the roe,
> And brings my longings tangled in her hair.
> To joy[2] her love I'll build a kingly bower,
> Seated in hearing of a hundred streams,
> That, for their homage to her sovereign joys,
> Shall, as the serpents fold into their nests
> In oblique turnings, wind their nimble waves
> About the circles of her curious walks;
> And with their murmur summon easeful sleep
> To lay his golden sceptre on her brows.

This has the charms of melody and graceful fancy; it is of the poetry of Tennyson's *Lotos Eaters* without the message. The others have the energy of thought, of passion; they do not soothe the ear as do Peele's verses, but they strike the deeper chords of the human heart.

[1] *James the Fourth.* [2] enjoy.

None of the three passages should be taken as fairly representing its author's normal style, but the contrast illustrates the essential nature of the difference between the work of Peele and Greene.

The reader who agrees with what has been said above will be prepared to acknowledge that Peele must stand below Greene, at least, in the ranks of dramatists. Strength and individuality are the life-blood of successful drama, and these he lacked. Yet he merits the fame awarded to his group. He was a poet; the refinement, the music, the gentler attributes of his best verse were a valuable contribution to the drama; his sweetness joined hands with Marlowe's energy in helping to drive from the stage, as impossible, the rude irregular lines that had previously satisfied audiences.

It has been claimed that he was also, to some extent, an artist in plot-structure. The mingle-mangle of scarcely connected incidents which did duty with Greene for a plot, the irrepressible by-play with which Lyly loved to interrupt his main story, were rejected by him. *Edward the First* is an exception; in his best plays he achieved a certain dignified directness and simplicity. But he was as incapable as Greene of concentration upon one point, or of working up the interest to an impending catastrophe. He was content with chronological order for his guide; his directness is the directness of the Chronicle History. *The Battle of Alcazar* and *David and Bethsabe* follow this method as completely as his avowedly chronicle play, *Edward the First*. It is a strange thing how plot-structure fell into abeyance in comedy after its long and strenuous evolution through the Interludes to *Ralph Roister Doister* and *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. We must confess, however reluctantly, that those early plays set an example in unity and concentration of interest

that was never surpassed by any of the comedies of the University Wits. Lyly may be said to have come nearest to it, though, handicapped by a passing affectation, he could never excite the same degree of interest. Greene's plots lack unity, and Peele's emphasis. We have to wait for Shakespeare before we can see comedy raised above the architectural standard set by Nicholas Udall.

The list of Peele's plays, in approximate order of time, is as follows: *The Arraignment of Paris* (1584), *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes* (printed 1599), *Edward the First* (printed 1593), *The Battle of Alcazar* (printed 1594), *The Old Wive's Tale* (printed 1595), *David and Bethsabe* (printed 1599).

The Arraignment of Paris sets forth, in five acts, the old Greek tale of Paris, the three goddesses, and the golden apple. Juno, Pallas and Venus graciously condescend to visit the vales of Ida, and are loyally welcomed by the minor deities of the earth, Flora especially making it her care that all the countryside shall wear its brightest colours. During their brief stay, Juno finds the golden apple, inscribed with *Detur pulcherrimae.* After some dispute Paris is called upon to give judgment, and awards the prize to Venus. There the Greek tale ends. But Peele adds an ingenious sequel. Juno and Pallas, indignant at the slight put upon them, appeal against this decision to a council of the gods. This brings quite a crowd of deities upon the stage, unable to devise a solution to such a knotty problem of wounded pride. Paris is summoned before this high court, but clears himself from the charge of unjust partiality. Finally it is agreed that the arbitrament of Diana shall be invited and accepted as conclusive. She, by a delicate compromise, satisfies the jealous susceptibilities of the three goddesses by preferring above them a nymph, Eliza, whose charms surpass their totalled attributes of

wealth, wisdom, and beauty. The story is provided with two under-plots, presenting opposite aspects of rejected love. In the one, Colin dies for love of disdainful Thestylis, who in her turn dotes despairingly upon an ugly churl. In the other, Oenone holds and loses the affections of Paris, stolen from her by the beauty of Venus; this is the most delicate portion of the whole play. Pretty songs are imbedded in the scenes—*Cupid's Curse* is a famous one—and many lines of captivating fancy will be found by an appreciative reader. On a well-furnished stage the valley of Mount Ida, where Pan, Flora and others of Nature's guardians direct her wild fruitfulness, where shepherds converse in groups or alone sing their grief to the skies, and Paris and Oenone, seated beneath a tree, renew their mutual pledges, must have looked very delightful. One cannot help thinking, however, that the gods and goddesses, probably magnificently arrayed and carrying splendour wherever they went, seriously detracted from the appearance of free Nature. Nevertheless, by the poet and the stage-manager they were, doubtless, prized equally with the rural background and the shepherds, perhaps even more than they. To them is given pre-eminence in the play. Indeed, what particularly impresses any one who remembers the stage as he reads, is the watchful provision for spectacular effect in every scene. It is this, combined with the author's choice of subject and characters, which has led to the comparison of this comedy with a Masque. The resemblance, too manifest to be overlooked, gives an additional interest to a play which thus is seen to hold something like an intermediary position between drama proper and that other, infinitely more ornate, form of court entertainment. Viewing it in this light, we are no longer surprised to read, in a stage direction at the

close, that Diana 'delivers the ball of gold to the Queen's own hand'. After all, the play, like a Masque, is little more than an exaggerated and richly designed compliment, the most beautiful of its kind. In selecting suitable extracts one is drawn from scene to scene, uncertain which deserves preference. The two offered here illustrate respectively the tuneful variety of Peele's verse and the delicate embroidery of Diana's famous decision.

(1)

[JUNO *bribes* PARIS *to award her the apple.*]

Juno. And for thy meed, sith I am queen of riches,
Shepherd, I will reward thee with great monarchies,
Empires, and kingdoms, heaps of massy gold,
Sceptres and diadems curious to behold,
Rich robes, of sumptuous workmanship and cost,
And thousand things whereof I make no boast:
The mould whereon thou treadest shall be of Tagus' sands,
And Xanthus shall run liquid gold for thee to wash thy hands;
And if thou like to tend thy flock, and not from them to fly,
Their fleeces shall be curlèd gold to please their master's eye;
And last, to set thy heart on fire, give this one fruit to me,
And, shepherd, lo, this tree of gold will I bestow on thee!

[JUNO's *Show. A Tree of Gold rises, laden with diadems and crowns of gold.*]

The ground whereon it grows, the grass, the root of gold,
The body and the bark of gold, all glistering to behold,
The leaves of burnish'd gold, the fruits that thereon grow
Are diadems set with pearl in gold, in gorgeous glistering show;
And if this tree of gold in lieu may not suffice,
Require a grove of golden trees, so Juno bear the prize.

(2)

[DIANA *describes the island kingdom of the nymph* ELIZA, *a figure of the* QUEEN.]

There wons[1] within these pleasant shady woods,
Where neither storm nor sun's distemperature
Have power to hurt by cruel heat or cold,
Under the climate of the milder heaven;
Where seldom lights Jove's angry thunderbolt,
For favour of that sovereign earthly peer;
Where whistling winds make music 'mong the trees;—
Far from disturbance of our country gods,
Amidst the cypress-springs, a gracious nymph,
That honours Dian for her chastity,
And likes the labours well of Phoebe's groves.
The place Elyzium hight[2], and of the place
Her name that governs there Eliza is;
A kingdom that may well compare with mine,
An ancient seat of kings, a second Troy,
Y-compass'd round with a commodious sea.

Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes merits a passing notice if only because it contains the earliest known example of a girl disguised as a page, the Princess Neronis waiting upon her lover in that office. As has been pointed out, however, in the discussion of *Gallathea*, Peele makes no really dramatic use of the novel situation. If the dramatist had been content with one knight instead of two, or had even vouchsafed the aid of acts and scenes, his readers would have been able to follow the succession of events much more clearly than is now possible: as it is, between Clyomon and Clamydes, the Golden Shield and the Silver Shield, there is constant confusion. But Peele was not born for chivalrous romance. A writer who could allow one of his heroes to begin his career by a piece of schoolboy trickery followed by headlong flight

[1] dwells. [2] is called.

to escape detection, and could make the sea-sickness of his other hero the cause of his introduction to the lady of his heart, had not the true spirit of romance in him. We meet our old acquaintances, the thinly disguised Vice and the rude clown of uncouth dialect, under the names of Subtle Shift and Corin; abstractions also reappear in Rumour and Providence. The crudity of the verse will be sufficiently illustrated in the first line:

> As to the weary wandering wights whom waltering waves environ.

The Famous Chronicle History of King Edward the First is almost as complete a medley as the most tangled play of Greene's. Peele's lack of power to concentrate interest makes itself lamentably felt throughout. We are conscious, as we read, that King Edward, or Longshanks, as he is always named, is intended to impress us with his sterling English qualities. He overcomes all difficulties, and if we could only unravel his thread from the skein of characters, we should acknowledge him to be a worthy monarch, brave, loving, wise, just and firm. One or two scenes, we feel, are inserted deliberately for the sake of heightening his character, notably that in which he elects to face single-handed a man whom he supposes to be the redoubtable Robin Hood and who proves to be no less than Llewellyn, Prince of Wales. Unfortunately these excellent intentions are not seconded by the rest of the play. Some of the scenes in which Edward takes part are not at all calculated to increase his dignity; in the last of all, for instance, it is hardly an English act on his part to conceal his identity in a monk's cowl and spy upon the secrets of his queen's dying confession. That, however, may have been pardoned by an Elizabethan audience; any trick may have been thought good enough

which exposed Spanish villany. A more serious defect is the undue prominence given to Llewellyn and to Queen Elinor. This is not accidental, for the full title of the play states that it is to include 'also the life of Llevellen rebell in Wales; lastly, the sinking of Queene Elinor, who sunck at Charingcrosse, and rose againe at Potters-hith, now named Queenehith'. Peele chose three distinct points of interest because he knew no better. It seemed to him, just as it did to Greene, that by so doing he would treble the interest of the play as a whole; both were a long way from comprehending the wisdom underlying the dramatic law of Unity of Action.

If not famous, Peele's Chronicle History has become, in a small way, infamous, by reason of the representation it gives of the queen's character. A Spaniard, she figures as a monster of cruelty, pride and vanity, capable of wishes and deeds which we have no desire to remember. At this distance of time, however, righteous indignation at the injustice done to a fair name is perhaps uncalled for. The play is only read by the curious student, and it is quite apparent, as others have pointed out, that the attack is directed more against the Spanish nation than against an individual. We may still regret the injustice, but we know better than to wonder at any misconception sixteenth-century Englishmen may have formed of their hated foe.

As a specimen of Peele's rarely exercised broad humour the knavery of the Welsh Friar, Hugh ap David, should be noticed; his trick for winning a hundred marks from 'sweet St. Francis' receiver' is, perhaps, the best part of it. More worthy of remembrance is Joan, admirably chosen, for her innocence and gentleness, to stand in contrast to Queen Elinor; the story of her happy love and most unhappy death adds a touch of genuine pathos

to the gruesome shadows of tragedy which darken the final pages. Much in her portrait, as in the prose scenes concerned with the Welsh Friar, may have been inspired by the success of Greene, whose influence is marked throughout the play.

For our illustrations we quote Gloucester's lament over his young wife—the closing speech of the play—, and one of several allusions to the English nation which testify to the poet's sincere and warm patriotism.

(1)

Gloucester. Now, Joan of Acon, let me mourn thy fall.
Sole, here alone, now sit thee down and sigh,
Sigh, hapless Gloucester, for thy sudden loss:
Pale death, alas, hath banish'd all thy pride,
Thy wedlock-vows! How oft have I beheld
Thy eyes, thy looks, thy lips, and every part,
How nature strove in them to show her art,
In shine, in shape, in colour and compare!
But now hath death, the enemy of love,
Stain'd and deform'd the shine, the shape, the red,
With pale and dimness, and my love is dead.
Ah, dead, my love! vile wretch, why am I living?
So willeth fate, and I must be contented:
All pomp in time must fade, and grow to nothing.
Wept I like Niobe, yet it profits nothing.
Then cease, my sighs, since I may not regain her;
And woe to wretched death that thus hath slain her!

(2)

Joan. Madam, if Joan thy daughter may advise,
Let not your honour make your manners change.
The people of this land are men of war,
The women courteous, mild, and debonair,
Laying their lives at princes' feet
That govern with familiar majesty.
But if their sovereigns once gin swell with pride,

Disdaining commons' love, which is the strength
And sureness of the richest commonwealth,
That prince were better live a private life
Than rule with tyranny and discontent.

If Peele wrote *The Battle of Alcazar*, which seems probable, he benefited by the mistakes of the previous play. It is a martial tragedy, imitating the verse and style of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* or Greene's *Alphonsus, King of Arragon*. Acts and scenes delimit the stages of the course of events, the distraction of humorous prose scenes is banished, independent plots are forbidden their old parallel existence, everything moves steadily towards the tragic conclusion. Lest there should still arise uncertainty as to the drift of the various incidents as they occur, a 'Presenter' is at hand to serve as prologue to each act and explain, not merely what must be understood as having happened off the stage in the intervals, but what is about to take place on the stage, and the purpose that lies behind it. The verse is regular and often vigorous, though the vigour sometimes appears forced, and the constant stream of end-stopt lines becomes monotonous. Murders that cannot find room elsewhere are perpetrated in dumb-show, ghosts within the wings cry out *Vindicta!*, and the leading characters suffer the usual inflatus of windy rant to make their dimensions more kingly. Still the play fails to achieve the right effect. There is no dominant hero, the central figure, if such there is, being the villain, Muly Mahamet the Moor. But his is not the career, nor his the character, at all likely to win either the sympathy or the interest of an English audience. Defeated, exiled, twice seen in desperate flight, treacherous, and incapable of anything but amazing speeches, he thoroughly deserves the ignominious fate reserved for him. Of the three other claimants to pre-

eminence, Sebastian lends his aid to the base Moor and is defeated and slain; Stukeley, the Englishman, is a traitor to his country, and is murdered on the battlefield in cold blood by his comrades; while Abdelmelec, who is alone successful in war, does not appear in more than five of the thirteen scenes, and is killed in the last battle. In action, too, there is a divided interest. The first act is entirely devoted to the campaign which places Abdelmelec on the throne of the usurping Moor; not until the fourth scene of the second act does King Sebastian of Portugal come upon the stage; only from that point onward are we concerned with his unsuccessful attempt —in which he is assisted by Stukeley—to restore the crown of Morocco to Muly Mahamet. Once more we have to lament that absence of unity and grip, though under improved conditions, which we noticed in Peele's former plays.

Captain Stukeley was a more interesting character off the stage than on; the details of his life may be found in Fuller, or in Dyce's prefatory note to the play in his edition of Peele's works. The surprising thing is that he was not hissed from the boards by indignant patriots. But his exploits, and his thoroughly English pride, seem to have awakened the sympathies of his countrymen, for his memory was cherished as that of a popular hero. His traitorous intention to conquer Ireland for the Pope, however, receives noble reproof from Peele in the mouths of Don Diego Lopez and King Sebastian. The latter's speech well deserves perusal. But we have quoted sufficiently already from Peele's patriotic eloquence.

The extravagant language of the Moor has been made immortal by Shakespeare: a line from one of his extraordinary speeches to his wife, Calipolis, in exile, is adapted by Pistol to his own rhetorical use (*Second Part of Henry*

the Fourth, II. iv). To show the inconsistencies over which rant unblushingly careers, we give two consecutive speeches by this terrible fellow.

[The Moor's Son *has just given a highly coloured description of the enemy's forces.*]

The Moor. Away, and let me hear no more of this.
Why, boy,
Are we successor to the great Abdelmunen,
Descended from th' Arabian Muly Xarif,
And shall we be afraid of Bassas and of bugs,[1]
Raw-head and Bloody-bone?
Boy, seest here this scimitar by my side?
Sith they begin to bathe in blood,
Blood be the theme whereon our time shall tread:
Such slaughter with my weapon shall I make
As through the stream and bloody channels deep
Our Moors shall sail in ships and pinnaces
From Tangier-shore unto the gates of Fess.

The Moor's Son. And of those slaughter'd bodies shall thy son
A hugy tower erect like Nimrod's frame,
To threaten those unjust and partial gods
That to Abdallas' lawful seed deny
A long, a happy, and triumphant reign.

[*At this point a* Messenger *enters, reports general disaster, and urges flight.*]

The Moor. Villain, what dreadful sound of death and flight
Is this wherewith thou dost afflict our ears?
But if there be no safety to abide
The favour, fortune and success of war,
Away in haste! Roll on, my chariot-wheels,
Restless till I be safely set in shade
Of some unhaunted place, some blasted grove
Of deadly yew or dismal cypress-tree,
Far from the light or comfort of the sun,

[1] bugbears.

There to curse heaven and he that heaves me hence;
To sick as Envy at Cecropia's gate,
And pine with thought and terror of mishaps.
Away!

The Old Wive's Tale is much shorter than Peele's other plays and is written mainly in prose, without any division into acts. It appears to have been an experiment in broad comedy to the exclusion of all things serious, for wherever a graver tone threatens to direct the action some absurd character or incident is hastily introduced to save the situation. Regarded as such, it cannot be said to be either successful or wholly unsuccessful. The opening scene is certainly one of the most racy and homely Inductions to be found in dramatic literature, while one or two of the other scenes, though they make poor reading, are calculated to rouse laughter when acted; the lower characters, at least, display plenty of animation, and the creation of that fantastic person of royal pedigree, Huanebango—'Polimackeroeplacidus my grandfather, my father Pergopolineo, my mother Dionora de Sardinia, famously descended'—with his effort to 'lisp in numbers' of classical accentuation—'Philida, phileridos, pamphilida, florida, flortos'—reveals humour of a finer edge than the mere laughter-raising kind. Against this moderate praise, however, must be set some blame. It has been said before that the play is a by-word for confusion. An extraordinary recklessness rules the introduction of characters, participation in one scene being, apparently, sufficient justification for the inclusion of a fresh character at any stage of the play. As vital an error is the neglect to excite our pity for Delia, round whom the whole story revolves; she is represented as thoroughly happy with her captor and so utterly forgetful of her brothers that she is content to ill-treat them at the will of Sacrapant. True, we are told that magic has

wrought the change in her. But a skilful dramatist would have left her some unconquered emotions of reluctance or distress to quicken our sympathy.

The story is this. Three lads, Antic, Frolic and Fantastic, having lost their way, are given shelter by a countryman, Clunch—a smith, by the way, like our old friend, Adam—whose goodwife, Madge, entertains two of them with a tale while the other sleeps with her husband. She begins correctly enough with a 'Once upon a time', but soon lands herself in difficulties amongst the various facts that require preliminary explanation before the story can be properly launched. At the right moment the people referred to themselves appear and the story passes from narration to action. We learn from two brothers that they are seeking their sister, Delia, who has been carried off by a wicked magician, Sacrapant—not to be confused with Greene's Sacripant. This same sorcerer has also separated a loving couple; by his art the lady, Venelia, has gone mad, and the youth, Erestus, is converted into an old man by day and a bear by night. The aged-looking Erestus is regarded throughout the countryside as a soothsayer. His neighbour, Lampriscus, cursed by two daughters, one of whom is frightfully ugly while the other is a virago, consults him about their marriages. By his advice they take their pitchers to a magic well, where, by a coincidence, each finds a husband. She of the hideous face easily satisfies Huanebango, while the vile-tempered maiden as readily contents the heart of Corebus, for Sacrapant has previously hurled blindness upon the former, and upon the latter deafness, because they dared to enter his realms in search of Delia. Meanwhile the brothers continue their quest and eventually come upon Sacrapant and their sister making merry together at a feast. At once the lady is sent indoors, thunder and

lightning herald disaster, and Sacrapant's magic takes them captive. Subsequently they are set to a task, with Delia standing over to speed their labours with a sharpened goad. It now becomes known that Sacrapant's power depends on the continued existence of a light enclosed within a glass vessel and buried in the earth. Delia has a lover, Eumenides. Acting on a generous impulse, this youth pays for the burial of one, Jack, whose friends are too poor to find the sexton's fees. Jack's ghost, in no more horrible form than that of an honest boy, forthwith repays the kindness by appointing himself Eumenides' guide, leading him to Sacrapant's castle, and obligingly slaying the magician at the critical moment by a touch of his ghostly hand. The buried light is dug up, Venelia, qualified by her madness to fulfil the conditions imposed by an old prophecy, breaks the glass and blows out the flame, and instantly all Sacrapant's wickedness is nullified. Venelia and Erestus are re-united, Delia is restored to her brothers and lover; we are not told of the shocks that must have come to Huanebango and Corebus when they suddenly became conscious of their respective wives' most prominent qualities. Into the midst of the rejoicing comes a demand from Jack's ghost for the fulfilment of Eumenides' compact that he should have half of whatever was won. Resolute to keep faith, Eumenides prepares to cut his lady in twain, when the ghost, satisfied with his honesty, restrains his arm. Thus the play ends happily.

We have given the story in full on account of its association, in the minds of some critics, with the plot of *Comus*. Because Milton, in another work, has shown himself acquainted with Peele's writings, they feel encouraged to see in the Ghost of Jack, Sacrapant, and Delia the prototypes of the Attendant Spirit, Comus, and

the Lady. One may suppose that the same foundation of resemblance establishes Peele as also the inspirer of the first book of *The Faerie Queene* through his *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes*, with its knight and lady and dragon and magician, Sansfoy. Professor Mason, on the other hand, prefers to regard as mere coincidences those points which are common to both. By the outline given, the reader who has not Peele's comedy at hand will be assisted in making his own choice between the two opinions.

David and Bethsabe presents the two stories of David's love for Bathsheba and of the revolt of Absalom, as found in the Second Book of Samuel (Chapters xi–xix). The succession of events is carefully observed, each least pleasant detail jealously retained, and in some places even the language closely imitated. Except in the old Bible plays, one does not often meet with such rigorous adherence to the original in the transference of facts from a narrative to a drama. To this adherence are due certain features which any one not fresh from reading the account in Samuel might easily attribute to the dramatist's skill—the differentiation of the characters, the varying moods of joy, sorrow, indignation, hope and despair, besides the unusual vigour of some of the scenes. Dramatic art, however, is frequently as severely tested in an author's selection of a subject as in his invention of one. From this test Peele's talent would have emerged triumphantly had he only possessed the ability to construct a plot; for there is an abundance of the right dramatic material in his subject, and in his best moments he displays wonderful mastery in the moulding of hard facts to his use. Nothing could be more perfectly done than the sublimation of the contents of three plain verses (Chapter xi. 2–4) to the delicate poetry of his famous opening scene. Unfortunately the method adopted is that of the chronicle history-

plays or of the nearly forgotten Miracles, to which class of drama *David and Bethsabe*, as a late survival, may be said to belong. It has other marks of retrogression to methods already old-fashioned in the year 1598, such as the introduction (twice) of a Chorus, and the absence of any division into acts, notwithstanding Peele's effective adoption of them in his previous tragedy. There is also, despite the occasional vigour shown in the portrayal of David, Absalom and Joab, the familiar weakness in concentration, the old lack of a dominant figure. We cannot help feeling that the author lost a great opportunity in not recognizing more fully the tragic potentialities of such a character as the rebel prince. And yet the play holds, and will continue to hold, a worthy place in Elizabethan drama on account of its poetry. The special qualities of Peele's poetic gift have been discussed in our consideration of his work as a whole. All that need be added here in praise is that had he written nothing else but *David and Bethsabe* and *The Arraignment of Paris* he might have challenged the right of precedence as a poet with Marlowe. But between those two plays what an amount of inferior workmanship lies!

Having already quoted an example of his verse in tender mood, we offer a favourable specimen of his more impassioned style:

David. What seems them best, then, that will David do.
But now, my lords and captains, hear his voice
That never yet pierc'd piteous heaven in vain;
Then let it not slip lightly through your ears;—
For my sake spare the young man, Absalon.
Joab, thyself didst once use friendly words
To reconcile my heart incens'd to him;
If, then, thy love be to thy kinsman sound,
And thou wilt prove a perfect Israelite,
Friend him with deeds, and touch no hair of him,—

Not that fair hair with which the wanton winds
Delight to play, and love to make it curl;
Wherein the nightingales would build their nests,
And make sweet bowers in every golden tress
To sing their lover every night asleep;—
O, spoil not, Joab, Jove's [1] fair ornaments,
Which he hath sent to solace David's soul!
The best, ye see, my lords, are swift to sin;
To sin our feet are wash'd with milk of roes
And dried again with coals of lightning.
O Lord, thou see'st the proudest sin's poor slave,
And with his bridle pull'st him to the grave!
For my sake, then, spare lovely Absalon.

Thomas Nash assisted Marlowe in *The Tragedy of Dido*, but *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (1592) is the only example of his independent dramatic work preserved for us. ''Tis no play neither, but a show', says one of its characters in describing it; and the same person, continuing, supplies this brief summary to its contents: 'Forsooth, because the plague reigns in most places in this latter end of summer, Summer must come in sick; he must call his officers to account, yield his throne to Autumn, make Winter his executor, with tittle-tattle Tom-boy.' The officers thus called to account are Ver, Solstitium, Sol, Orion, Harvest and Bacchus. Each enters in appropriate guise, with a train of attendants singing or dancing. Thus we have such stage-directions as, 'Enter Ver, with his train, overlaid with suits of green moss, representing short grass, singing': 'Enter Harvest, with a scythe on his neck, and all his reapers with sickles, and a great black bowl with a posset in it, borne before him: they come in singing': 'Enter Bacchus, riding upon an ass trapped in ivy, himself dressed in vine leaves, and

[1] Jehovah's.

a garland of grapes on his head; his companions having all jacks in their hands, and ivy garlands on their heads; they come singing.' Several of the songs have the true ring of country choruses; probably they were such, borrowed quite frankly by the dramatist, who would expect his audience to be familiar with them and even possibly to join in the singing. Such a one is this harvesting song—

> Merry, merry, merry; cheery, cheery, cheery;
> Trowl the black bowl to me;
> Hey derry, derry, with a poup and a lerry,
> I'll trowl it again to thee.
> Hooky, hooky, we have shorn,
> And we have bound,
> And we have brought Harvest
> Home to town.

Others again are more restrained, though almost all have a certain charming artlessness about them. A verse may be quoted from the Spring Song.

> The palm and may make country houses gay,
> Lambs frisk and play, the shepherds pipe all day,
> And hear we aye birds tune this merry lay,
> Cuckow, jug, jug, pu-we, to-wit, to-whoo.

Regarded as a show, then, the performance is deserving of all praise, its fresh pastoralism confirming the hold upon the stage of unaffected country scenes. It must have followed not long after Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay.* It makes no claim to belong to regular drama, so that we need waste no words in uninvited criticism of its weakness in plot, action and character. Approving mention must be made of Will Summer—no relation to Summer, the season of the year, who is referred to in the title—Henry the Eighth's Court Jester, who plays the part of 'presenter' and general critic,

standing apart from the main action but thrusting in his remarks as the spirit moves him. He is responsible for the description of the performance as a show. His purpose is fully declared at the start, when he announces that he will 'sit as a chorus and flout the actors and him (*the author*) at the end of every scene'. Forthwith he proceeds to offer advice to the actors about their behaviour: 'And this I bar, over and besides, that none of you stroke your beards to make action, play with your cod-piece points, or stand fumbling on your buttons, when you know not how to bestow your fingers. Serve God, and act cleanly.' Always his honesty exceeds his consideration for the feelings of others. Three clowns and three maids have barely ended their rustic jig when he calls out, 'Beshrew my heart, of a number of ill legs I never saw worse dancers. How bless'd are you that the wenches of the parish do not see you!' And his yawn carries a world of disgust with it as he murmurs, over one of Summer's lectures, 'I promise you truly I was almost asleep; I thought I had been at a sermon.' Historically he is interesting as being another example of the attempts made at this time, as in *James the Fourth* and *The Old Wives' Tale*, to provide a means of entertainment, more popular than formal prologues, epilogues or choruses, to fill up unavoidable pauses between scenes.

Far more than most plays *Summer's Last Will and Testament* contains references to contemporary events,—the recent plague, drought, flood, and short harvests are all mentioned. Satire, too, enlivens some of the longest speeches; for the writer was primarily and by profession a satirist. Although the finer graces of poetry are not his, his verse indicates the gradual advance that was being made to greater ease and freedom; his lines are not weighted with sounding words, nor is the 'privilege of

metre' restricted to the expression of beautiful, wise or emotional thought, as was commonly the case elsewhere. The country freshness of his lyrics has been already praised. Altogether, despite the slight amount of his work in drama, Nash is not a dramatist to be dismissed with a mere expression of indifference or contempt. Several things in it make *Summer's Last Will and Testament* a production worth remembering. The following extract illustrates the qualities of Nash's blank verse.

Orion. Yet in a jest (since thou rail'st so 'gainst dogs)
I'll speak a word or two in their defence.
That creature's best that comes most near to men;
That dogs of all come nearest, thus I prove.
First, they excell us in all outward sense,
Which no one of experience will deny;
They hear, they smell, they see better than we.
To come to speech, they have it questionless,
Although we understand them not so well:
They bark as good old Saxon as may be,
And that in more variety than we,
For they have one voice when they are in chase,
Another when they wrangle for their meat,
Another when we beat them out of doors. . . .
That dogs physicians are, thus I infer;
They are ne'er sick but they know their disease
And find out means to ease them of their grief.
Special good surgeons to cure dangerous wounds:
For, stricken with a stake into the flesh.
This policy they use to get it out;
They trail one of their feet upon the ground,
And gnaw the flesh about where the wound is,
Till it be clean drawn out; and then, because
Ulcers and sores kept foul are hardly cur'd,
They lick and purify it with their tongue,
And well observe Hippocrates' old rule,
The only medicine for the foot is rest,—
For if they have the least hurt in their feet
They bear them up and look they be not stirr'd.

When humours rise, they eat a sovereign herb,
Whereby what cloys their stomachs they cast up;
And as some writers of experience tell,
They were the first invented vomiting.
Sham'st thou not, Autumn, unadvisedly
To slander such rare creatures as they be?

CHAPTER VI

TRAGEDY: LODGE, KYD, MARLOWE, *ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM*.

GREAT as was the advance made by Lyly and Greene in Comedy, the advance made by Kyd and Marlowe in Tragedy was greater. Indeed it may almost be said that they created Tragedy as we know it. We have only to recall the dull speeches of *Gorboduc*, the severe formality of *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, to recognize the change that had to take place before the level of such a tragedy as *Romeo and Juliet* could be reached. Yet between the two last-mentioned tragedies, if 1591 be accepted as the date of Shakespeare's play, there lies a period of but four years. The nature of the change was foreshadowed by the tragi-comedy, *Damon and Pythias*. In an earlier chapter we dealt with the divergence of that play from the English Senecan school of tragedy. This divergence, accepted as right, set Tragedy on its feet. Great things, however, still remained to be done.

The supreme quality of Tragedy is in its power to raise feelings of intense emotion, of horror or grief, or of both. Failing in this, it fails altogether. To this end Seneca introduced his Ghost, and his disciples filled their speeches with passionate outcry and lurid pictures of horrible events unfit to be presented in actuality. *Gorboduc* rained death upon a whole nation, *Tancred and Gismunda* invoked every awful epithet and gruesome description of dungeon and murder, for the same purpose.

But the purpose remained unfulfilled—at least, for an English audience nurtured on more vigorous diet than mere words. The ear cannot comprehend horror in its fullness as can the eye. Even the author of *Tancred and Gismunda* was conscious of this, for at the end he placed the deaths of both father and daughter, with horrible accompaniments, upon the stage. He gave his audience what it wanted. Nor were the English people slow to demand the same from others. We shall find, in fact, that tragedy continued to borrow the exaggerated violence of the Senecan school, even when it was most emphatically rejecting its dramatic principles. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that the work of Kyd and Marlowe was merely to substitute actions for descriptions, and sights for sounds. The difference between classic and romantic tragedy is not so simple. We shall understand their task more readily if we pause to consider what are the chief elements of Shakespearian tragedy.

Approximately they may be stated thus: an overwhelming catastrophe, clearly drawn characters which appeal to our sympathy or hate, impressive scenes, and a strong, eventful plot. Of these the first had never been lost since Sackville and Norton. The second had been attempted in *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, not without a measure of success. But both called for improvement, the former particularly having struck too tremendous a pitch. The third and fourth elements were almost unknown, thanks to the exclusion of all action from the stage; and finally, no appeal could be wholly successful which wearied the audience with so stiff and monotonous a diction. Verse, plot, scenes, characters, catastrophe—these are the features which we must watch if we would know what Kyd and Marlowe did for tragedy.

Before we turn to their plays, however, there is one

other of the University Wits whose chief dramatic work is tragic and who must therefore be included in this chapter. Since his tragedy stands, in its inferiority, quite apart from the tragedies of the other two, we shall dispose of it first.

Apart from his undefined share in *A Looking-Glass for London and England*, all that we have of Thomas Lodge's dramatic work is *The Wounds of Civil War*, or, as its other title ran, *The Most Lamentable and True Tragedies of Marius and Sylla* (about 1588). The author went to Plutarch for his facts and characters, and shows, in his treatment of the subject, that he caught at least a measure of inspiration from that famous biographer's vivid portraits. Marius and Sylla are clearly, though not impartially, discriminated, the former appearing as the dauntless veteran, ready to die sooner than acknowledge himself too old for command, the latter figuring as the man of resistless force and intense pride. Partiality is seen in the allocation of most of the insolence and cruelty to Sylla, while our sympathy is constantly being evoked on the side of Marius. It is Sylla who first draws his sword against the peace of the state; it is Marius who magnanimously sends Sylla's wife and daughter to him unharmed. Moreover, wooden as they sometimes are, these great antagonists and their fellow-senators show the right Roman nature at need. Marius sleeping quietly under the menace of death; his heroic son, with his little band of soldiers, committing suicide rather than surrender at Praeneste; Octavius scorning to imitate the vacillation and cowardice of his colleagues; Sylla plunging back alone into battle, that his example may reanimate the courage of his fleeing army: these are scenes that recall the best traditions of Rome. They

are taken from Plutarch, it is true; but they are presented sympathetically and with stimulating effect. Thus, though the order of events has necessarily to be mainly historical, each is intimately related to the central clash of ambitions, with the result that singleness of interest is never lost until the death of Marius. In carrying history down to Sylla's abdication and death, the author betrays that ignorance of dramatic unity common to most of his contemporaries.

The play is divided into five acts, but though there are obviously more than that number of scenes, the subdivisions are not formally distinguished. By the stiff, rhetorical style of its verse we seem to be taken back to the days of *Gorboduc* rather than to the year of Marlowe's *Edward the Second.* Save in two quite uncalled-for humorous episodes, the language used maintains a monotonous level of stateliness or emotion. The plot is eminently suited for indignant and defiant speeches, but Lodge's poetic inspiration has not the wings to bear him much above the 'middle flight'. The following passage fairly illustrates his style.

[CORNELIA *and* FULVIA, *expecting close imprisonment, if not death, are set at liberty.*]

Marius. Virtue, sweet ladies, is of more regard
In Marius' mind, where honour is enthron'd,
Than Rome or rule of Roman empery.
[*Here he puts chains about their necks.*]
The bands, that should combine your snow-white wrists,
Are these which shall adorn your milk-white necks.
The private cells, where you shall end your lives,
Is Italy, is Europe—nay, the world.
Th' Euxinian Sea, the fierce Sicilian Gulf,
The river Ganges and Hydaspes' stream
Shall level lie, and smooth as crystal ice,
While Fulvia and Cornelia pass thereon.

The soldiers, that should guard you to your deaths,
Shall be five thousand gallant youths of Rome,
In purple robes cross-barr'd with pales of gold,
Mounted on warlike coursers for the field,
Fet [1] from the mountain-tops of Corsica,
Or bred in hills of bright Sardinia,
Who shall conduct and bring you to your lord.
Ay, unto Sylla, ladies, shall you go,
And tell him Marius holds within his hands
Honour for ladies, for ladies rich reward;
But as for Sylla and for his compeers,
Who dare 'gainst Marius vaunt their golden crests,
Tell him for them old Marius holds revenge,
And in his hands both triumphs life and death.

Only two plays, *The Spanish Tragedy* (before 1588) and *Cornelia* (printed 1594), are definitely known to have been written by Thomas Kyd. There are two others, however, which are commonly attributed to him, *Jeronimo* and *Soliman and Perseda*. *The Spanish Tragedy* continues the story of *Jeronimo* with so much care in the perpetuation of each character—Villuppo and Pedringano are examples—that it is natural to suppose them both by the same author; in which case 1587 may be guessed as the date of the latter. Different but strong internal evidence points to Kyd's authorship of *Soliman and Perseda*. It has many features corresponding to those found in *The Spanish Tragedy*. The Chorus of Love, Fortune and Death, in its attitude to the play, closely resembles that of the Ghost and Revenge. Most of the characters come to a violent end, and in each play the list of deaths is carefully enumerated by the triumphant spirit, Death or the Ghost. Then there are similarities of lines and phrases and remarkable identity in certain tricks of style, notably in

[1] fetched.

the love of repetition and in a peculiar form of reasoning after the fashion of a sorites.—Curiously enough, these same tricks are found, in equally emphatic form, in *Locrine*, an anonymous play of somewhat later date.—We may compare, for example, the two following extracts:

(1)

Erastus. No, no; my hope full long ago was lost,
And Rhodes itself is lost, or else destroy'd:
If not destroy'd, yet bound and captivate;
If captivate, then forc'd from holy faith;
If forc'd from faith, for ever miserable:
For what is misery but want of God?
And God is lost if faith be overthrown.
(*Soliman and Perseda*, Act IV.)

(2)

Balthazar. First, in his hand he brandished a sword,
And with that sword he fiercely waged war,
And in that war he gave me dangerous wounds,
And by those wounds he forced me to yield,
And by my yielding I became his slave.
(*The Spanish Tragedy*, Act II.)

Finally, the play acted at the close of *The Spanish Tragedy* comprises the main characters and general drift (with marked differences) of the plot of *Soliman and Perseda*. This, in itself no proof of authorship, provides us with a clue to date. It is not likely that the author deliberately altered the plot of a well-known play. Yet we know from Ben Jonson that Kyd's tragedies were very popular. We shall be more safe in concluding that the wide popularity of that scene in *The Spanish Tragedy* led him to extend the minor play to the proportions of a complete drama, making such changes as would then be most suitable to a larger groundwork. This view is supported by

the decreased use of rhyme, intermingled with the blank verse, in *Soliman and Perseda*. The play, then, may be approximately dated 1588–90.

It would be as well to dismiss *Cornelia* at once. Wholly Senecan and dull, it is merely a translation of a French play of the same name by Garnier. As such it has no interest for us here.

Jeronimo derives its name from one of the principal characters, but it is really the tragedy of Andrea. This nobleman's appointment as ambassador from Spain to Portugal arouses the jealous enmity of the Duke of Castile's son, Lorenzo: it is also the means of his introduction to the man who is to bring about his death at the end, Prince Balthezar of Portugal. The catastrophe, therefore, may be said to start from that point. Lorenzo's intrigues begin at once. Casting around for some one apt for villainous deeds, he bethinks him of Lazarotto,

> A melancholy, discontented courtier,
> Whose famished jaws look like the chap of death;
> Upon whose eyebrows hangs damnation;
> Whose hands are washed in rape and murders bold.

Him he suborns to murder Andrea on his return. At the same time he schemes a secret stab at the love that exists between his own sister, Bell'-Imperia, and Andrea. To this end he arranges that a rival lover, Alcario, shall have access to her in the disguise of the absent nobleman, and in order to avert her suspicions he has it noised about the Court that Andrea is about to return. Fortunately it is just here that his plans conflict. Lazarotto, hearing the false rumour, loiters about in expectation of seeing Andrea, and, perceiving the disguised Alcario exchanging affectionate greetings with Bell'-Imperia, has no doubt of his man. Alcario falls. But Lorenzo is on the spot

to cover up his traces. Promising Lazarotto a certain pardon, he leads the unsuspecting villain into foolhardy lies until sentence of instant execution is passed, when a check upon his further speech is immediately applied and his tongue silenced for ever. Meanwhile, Andrea has been carrying a bold front in Portugal, passing swiftly from the tactful speech of diplomacy to the fierce language of defiance. Herein he arouses the hot spirit of Balthezar. Word leaps to word, challenge to challenge. Each recognizes the honour and valiancy of the other, and it is arranged that they shall seek each other out in battle, to settle their rivalry by single combat. Andrea returns to Spain. War follows. Twice Andrea and Balthezar meet. On the first occasion Andrea is saved only by the intervention of a gallant youth, his devoted friend, Horatio. On the second occasion he overthrows his opponent but, in the moment of victory, is slain by the pikes of Portuguese soldiery. Horatio arrives on the scene in time to witness Balthezar's exultation over the corpse. Taking the combat upon himself he forces the prince to the ground, but is robbed of the full glory of such a capture by the baseness of Lorenzo, who darts in and himself receives Balthezar's surrendered sword. Victory ultimately rests with the Spaniards. Andrea's body is buried with full military honours, his Ghost personally attending, with Revenge, to indicate to Horatio, by gestures, his sensibility of his friend's kindness. The epilogue is spoken by Horatio's father, Jeronimo, even as the opening lines of the play are concerned with his promotion to the high office of marshal.

The weak point of the play lies in the second half of the plot; Andrea's death, lamentable as a catastrophe, achieves nothing, except, perhaps, the satisfaction of a hidden destiny. Those purposes which openly aim at his death

are left incomplete. Lorenzo's deep schemes, from which much is expected, come to nothing; his revenge is certainly not glutted. Balthezar seeks to gain honour in victory, but is robbed of it by Horatio and his own soldiers. Then, too, the interest excited by Lorenzo's hatred leads us into something like a blind alley; Andrea escapes and the whole scene is transferred to the battle-field. Nevertheless, the play offers compensations. It provides one or two striking scenes, possibly the best being that in which we watch, in suspense, the mutual destruction of Lorenzo's plans. The verse, again, has many fine lines and vigorous passages. On the whole it is perhaps less studied, more natural and animated than Kyd's later verse. Rhyme is used freely, yet without forcing itself upon our notice with leaden pauses. From among many quotable passages the following may be selected for their energy.

(1)

[*The Portuguese Court.* ANDREA *and* BALTHEZAR *exchange defiance.*]

Andrea. Prince Balthezar, shall's meet?
Balthezar. Meet, Don Andrea? yes, in the battle's bowels;
Here is my gage, a never-failing pawn;
'Twill keep his day, his hour, nay minute, 'twill.
Andrea. Then thine and this, possess one quality.
Balthezar. O, let them kiss!
Did I not understand thee noble, valiant,
And worthy my sword's society with thee,
For all Spain's wealth I'd not grasp hands.
Meet Don Andrea? I tell thee, noble spirit,
I'd wade up to the knees in blood, I'd make
A bridge of Spanish carcases, to single thee
Out of the gasping army.
Andrea. Woot thou, prince?
Why, even for that I love [thee].

Balthezar. Tut, love me, man, when we have drunk
Hot blood together; wounds will tie
An everlasting settled amity,
And so shall thine.

(2)

[*On the battle-field* ANDREA *searches for* BALTHEZAR.]

Andrea. —Prince Balthezar!
Portugal's valiant heir!
The glory of our foe, the heart of courage,
The very soul of true nobility,
I call thee by thy right name: answer me!
Go, captain, pass the left wing squadron; hie:
Mingle yourself again amidst the army;
Pray, sweat to find him out.— [*Exit* Captain.]
This place I'll keep.
Now wounds are wide, and blood is very deep;
'Tis now about the heavy tread of battle;
Soldiers drop down as thick as if death mowed them;
As scythe-men trim the long-haired ruffian fields,
So fast they fall, so fast to fate life yields.

Jeronimo has given us a really notable villain. From the first this character gains and holds our attention by the intellectuality of his wickedness. He is no common stabber, nor the kind of wretch who murders for amusement. Jealousy, the darkest and most potent of motives, lies behind his hate. He would have Andrea dead. But his position as the Duke of Castile's son forbids the notion of staining his own hands in blood. A hired creature must be his tool, whose secrecy may be secured either by bribery or death, preferably by death. A double plot, too, must be laid, so that, if one part fails, the other may bring success. So we watch the net being spread around the feet of the unwary victim, and hold our breath as the critical moment approaches when a chance recognition will decide everything. Undoubtedly

the author has achieved a genuine triumph in all this. Some of us may see the germ of his villain in Edwards's Carisophus; there is the same element of craft and double-dealing, of laying unseen snares for the innocent. But it is no more than the germ. The advance beyond the earlier sketch is immense. Lazarotto, the perfect instrument for crime, has not Lorenzo's position, wealth or motive; nevertheless a family likeness exists between the two. Lazarotto's cynicism is of an intellectual order, as is his ready lying to avert suspicion from his master. Perhaps the most shuddering moment of the play is when he leans carelessly against the wall, waiting for his victim, 'like a court-hound that licks fat trenchers clean.' We fear and loathe him for the callous brutality of that simile and for that careless posture. Yet even he cannot fathom the blackness of Lorenzo's soul, and falls a prey to a greater treachery than his own. This cunning removal of a lesser villain by a greater is repeated in *The Spanish Tragedy* and is closely imitated by Marston in *Antonio's Revenge* (or *The Second Part of Antonio and Mellida*). Lorenzo and Lazarotto together are the first of a famous line of stage-villains. Amongst their celebrated descendants may be named Tourneur's D'Amville and Borachio, Webster's Ferdinand and Bosola, and the already referred-to Piero and Strotzo of Marston.

All the other characters, except one, reproduce familiar types of brave soldiers and proud monarchs. Jeronimo himself, however, stands apart. Though completely overshadowed in our memory by his terrible development in the next play, he has here a certain independent interest on account of age and humour. True, he announces that he is just fifty, which is no great age. But he is old, as Lear is old; he is called the father of his kingdom. Vague, fleeting yet recurrent

is the resemblance between him and Polonius. Tradition bids us regard Polonius as an intentionally humorous creation. Jeronimo's humour is of the same family. We feel sure that this newly appointed Marshal of Spain pottered about the Court, wagging his beard sagaciously over the unwisdom of youth, his mind full of responsibility, his heart of courage, but his tongue letting fall, every now and then, simple half-foolish sayings which betrayed the approach of dotage. He is very short, and exhibits a childish vanity in constantly referring to his shortness. 'As short my body, short shall be my stay.' 'My mind's a giant, though my bulk be small.' By such quaint speeches does he excite our smiles. And yet, by a very human touch, he is represented as furiously resenting any slighting allusion, by any one else, to his stature. In the *pourparlers* before battle Prince Balthezar grows impertinent. But we will quote the lines, and so take leave of Jeronimo.

[*The Portuguese have already made a demonstration, with drums and colours.*]

Jeronimo. What, are you braving us before we come!
We'll be as shrill as you. Strike 'larum, drum!
[*They sound a flourish on both sides.*]
Balthezar. Thou inch of Spain!
Thou man, from thy hose downward scarce so much!
Thou very little longer than thy beard!
Speak not such big words; they'll throw thee down,
Little Jeronimo! words greater than thyself!
It must not [be].
Jeronimo. And thou long thing of Portugal, why not?
Thou, that art full as tall
As an English gallows, upper beam and all;
Devourer of apparel, thou huge swallower,
My hose will scarce make thee a standing collar.
What! have I almost quited you?
Andrea. Have done, impatient marshal.

The Spanish Tragedy continues the story of *Jeronimo*. Balthazar (the spelling has changed) is brought back to Spain, the joint captive of Horatio and Lorenzo: to the former, however, is allotted the ransom, while to the latter falls the privilege of guarding the prisoner in honourable captivity. The Portuguese prince now falls in love with Bell'-Imperia, and has her brother's full consent to the match. But that lady has already transferred her affections to young Horatio. Lorenzo encourages Balthazar to solve the difficulty by the young man's death. While Bell'-Imperia and Horatio are making love together by night in a garden-bower, Lorenzo, Balthazar and two servants (Serberine and Pedringano) surprise them and hang Horatio to a tree beside the entrance. They then decamp with the lady, whom they forthwith shut up closely in her room at home. Old Hieronimo (formerly Jeronimo), alarmed by the outcry, rushes into the garden, closely followed by his wife Isabella. The body is instantly cut down, but life is extinct.—The rest of the play, from the beginning of the third act, is concerned with Hieronimo's revenge. It is a terrible story. His first information as to the names of the murderers reaches him in a message, written in blood, from Bell'-Imperia. This, however, he fears as a trap, and attempts to corroborate it from the girl's own lips. Unfortunately he only succeeds in awakening the suspicions of Lorenzo, who, to make the secret surer, bribes Pedringano to murder Serberine, at the same time arranging for watchmen to arrest Pedringano. Balthazar is drawn into the matter that he may press forward the execution of Serberine's murderer, while Lorenzo poses to the wretch as his friend with promises of pardon. Pedringano consequently is beguiled to death. Lorenzo is now at ease, and enlarges his sister's liberty. The suggestion of a political marriage between her and

Balthazar is warmly supported by the king. Alone among the courtiers Hieronimo is plunged in unabated grief, uncertain where to seek revenge. By good fortune Pedringano, before his trial, wrote a confession, which the hangman finds and delivers to the Marshal. This corroborates the statement of Bell'-Imperia. Yet it brings small comfort, as it seems impossible to strike so high as at Lorenzo and Balthazar. In his despair Hieronimo contemplates suicide, until he remembers that the act would leave the murderers unpunished. He cries aloud before the king for justice, digs frantically into the earth with his dagger in mad excess of misery, then hurries away without telling his wrong. He haunts his garden at night-time; and in the silence of that darkness at last hits upon a scheme: under the appearance of quietness and simplicity he will return to Lorenzo's society, awaiting his time to strike. As if to soothe him with the thought that his griefs are shared by others, chance brings before him one, Bazulto, an old man also bereaved of his son by murder. The reminder, however, is too sharp: Hieronimo becomes temporarily mad, mistaking Bazulto for Horatio and uttering pathetic laments over the change that has passed over his youthful beauty.

Sweet boy, how art thou chang'd in death's black shade!
Had Proserpine no pity on thy youth,
But suffer'd thy fair crimson-colour'd spring
With withered winter to be blasted thus?
Horatio, thou art older than thy father.

When the fit passes, he and Bazulto go off together, one in their misery. But the guileful scheme is not forgotten. Some one has observed the strained relations between the Marshal and Lorenzo: Lorenzo's father insists on a reconciliation, and Hieronimo cordially agrees. Even when the final ratification is given to Bell'-Imperia's marriage

with Balthazar, Hieronimo is all smiles and acquiescence. He is willing to heighten the festivities with a play. Lorenzo, Balthazar, Bell'-Imperia and himself are to be the actors, though two of them demur at first at the choice of a tragedy. Still Lorenzo suspects no harm, for he is not present at the interview between the girl and the old man, in which she denounces his apparently weakening thirst for revenge, only to learn the secret of that gentle exterior. Unhappily, the delay of justice has preyed too grievously upon the mind of Isabella. There have been moments when she ran frantic. In a final throe of madness, having hacked down the fatal tree, she thrusts the knife into her own breast. The great day comes, and before the Viceroy of Portugal (father of Balthazar), the Spanish king, the Duke of Castile, and their train, Hieronimo's tragedy is acted. Real daggers, however, have been substituted for wooden ones. As the play proceeds, Bell'-Imperia kills Balthazar and herself, while Hieronimo slays Lorenzo. The only one left alive, Hieronimo, now explains the terrible realism behind all this seeming. Castile and the Viceroy learn that their children are dead, two of them killed to revenge the murder of Horatio. The drawing aside of the curtain at the back of the stage reveals that youth's corpse, avenged at last. Horrible scenes follow, Hieronimo being prevented from hanging himself as he intended. But, desperate, he bites out his tongue, stabs the Duke of Castile, and succeeds in killing himself. The Ghost of Andrea and Revenge, who opened the play and served as chorus to three previous acts, now close the play in triumph.

We may omit from our consideration the additions to the original supplied by Ben Jonson or some other dramatist of genius. These include the famous 'Painter'

episode, part of the scene where Hieronimo finds his son's body hanging to a tree, his wonderful discourse to the 'two Portingals' on the nature of a son, and a section of the last scene. The strange hand is easily recognizable in the rugged irregularity and forcefulness of the lines. Attributable to it is the major portion of Hieronimo's madness, which accordingly occupies but a small space in our outline of the play. Structurally, the plot gains nothing by the additions; indeed, the 'Painter' episode duplicates and thereby weakens the effect of the conversation between Hieronimo and Bazulto. Nevertheless we will venture to quote a few lines from the speech to the Portingals, inasmuch as they aptly describe the underlying principle of the tragedy:

Well, heaven is heaven still!
And there is Nemesis and furies,
And things call'd whips;
And they sometimes do meet with murderers:
They do not always escape, that's some comfort.
Ay, ay, ay, and then time steals on, and steals, and steals,
Till violence leaps forth, like thunder, wrapp'd
In a ball of fire,
And so doth bring confusion to them all.

From the hour of Horatio's dastardly murder we wait for Nemesis to fall upon the murderers. We see Lorenzo fortifying himself against detection; we watch, while 'time steals on, and steals, and steals'; Isabella, tired of waiting, kills herself; Hieronimo himself threatens to fail us, so terrible are his sufferings; the crime seems forgotten by those who committed it; its reward is about to drop into Balthazar's hands; and then, at last, 'violence leaps forth, like thunder, . . . and so doth bring confusion to them all'.

When we remember the date, as early as, or earlier

than, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, we may be excused if we call *The Spanish Tragedy* a triumph of dramatic genius. Fully to appreciate its greatness we have only to compare the plot with that of any preceding tragedy, or of any play by Lyly, Greene, or Peele. In none of them shall we find anything approaching the masterful grip upon its spectators, the appeal to their sympathies, the alternation of fear and hope, the skilful subordination of many incidents to one purpose, the absolute rightness yet horror of the conclusion (the inset play), of Kyd's tragedy. It will repay us to examine some of the details of its workmanship.

The crisis begins, for the first time, to gravitate towards the centre of the play. In Classical Drama tragedies open with the crisis. English tragedies of the Senecan type tend to adopt the same practice: *Gorboduc* begins with Videna's report of the proposal to divide the kingdom; *The Misfortunes of Arthur* begins with the king's return, referred to as imminent. Even the first scene of *Doctor Faustus* presents Faustus rejecting divinity for magic, while Mephistophilis enters in the third scene. By delaying the crisis, however, two great advantages are secured: the necessity of the catastrophe is more fully recognized by the spectators; and their capacity for emotion is not strained to the point of weariness before the last great scene is reached. Yet the sense of tragedy must not be entirely absent from the first part; otherwise the gravity of the crisis will come with too great a shock. Kyd's purpose in introducing the Villuppo incident is here discovered. He uses it with much skill as a counterbalance to the aspect of the main plot. Thus, immediately after the apparent satisfaction of the rival claims of Horatio and Lorenzo, he places the unsuspected treachery of Villuppo to Alexandro, as if to warn

us not to judge merely from the surface: but when the wickedness of Lorenzo attains its blackest moment in the murder of Horatio, he supplies a ray of hope by the presentment of Villuppo's punishment, to let us know that justice still reigns in the world. Further, the intense (though needless) grief of the Viceroy over the supposed death of his son prepares us for the agony of Hieronimo, while the narrow escape of the innocent Alexandro excites our repugnance for hasty revenge and makes us sympathetically tolerant of Hieronimo's equally extreme caution in ascertaining that Lorenzo really is the murderer. We could wish, perhaps, that Kyd had found material for these two scenes in the Spanish Court: the transition to the Portuguese palace is a far and sudden flight. But his recognition of the artistic need of such scenes is notable and sound.

It is worth while to observe the close interweaving, the subtle irony and contrasts, the perfect harmony of the details. We must review them quite briefly. To illustrate the first, Pedringano's letter is not the 'wonderful discovery' that usually saves lost situations in weak novels: it has been referred to by him as already written before the Page takes Lorenzo's message, and its incriminating contents have been clearly indicated; nothing, moreover, could be more in order than that it should be found on him by the hangman and delivered to the judge who passed sentence. Or again, the success of Hieronimo's masque in the first act supplies the reason for Balthazar's request for a play at his wedding; that last tragedy is not suggested fortuitously to accommodate some previous scheme of Hieronimo's. The powerful nature of the meeting between Hieronimo and Bazulto was recognized by that other writer who added the 'Painter' episode in close imitation of it. But almost as bitter in

its irony is the position of Hieronimo as judge, executing justice upon Serberine's murderer while his own son's murderers go scot free. Grimly ironical, too, is Castile's satisfaction in the reconciliation of Lorenzo and the Marshal, and grimmer and more ironical still the request for the fatal play by Lorenzo and Balthazar themselves, who of all men should most have shrunk from it. The most critical element in the general harmony of the play is the character of Bell'-Imperia. Kyd's women are his weak point, and this heroine is no brilliant exception. We certainly do not fall in love with her. But his sense of what is needed for the right tragic effect carries him through successfully in essential matters. Were Bell'-Imperia weak, irresolute, had she the feeble constancy of Massinger's or Heywood's famous heroines, there would be a wrecking flaw in the accumulated, resistless demand for revenge. As it is, her love for Horatio is passionate (though lacking delicacy), her responses to Balthazar's advances are cold, and her reproachful words to Hieronimo, for his delay in striking, proclaim her entirely at one with him in his final action. The part played by Isabella is also subordinated to the total effect. It may be questioned whether her madness does not weaken by exaggeration the impression made by Hieronimo's frenzy; but it must be remembered that her part was provided before the additional mad scenes, the work of the later hand, were included in the play. Kyd deliberately chose that her madness should precede and prepare us for the madness of Hieronimo, and it must be admitted that the interpolator's departure from this order has little to be said in its favour. As the weaker character, Isabella should be the first to collapse. Her frantic death, just before the 'play', emphasizes the imperative necessity that the long postponement of justice should be ended at

last. With never failing watchfulness of his audience Kyd softens the tension directly afterwards with a few light touches on the staging and disguises required for the forthcoming performance. Lastly, the choice of a court tragedy as the instrument of Hieronimo's revenge is admirable alike for its naturalness and for dramatic effect as a flashlight re-illumination of Lorenzo's and Balthazar's crime in all its horror, in the very hour of their punishment. Lorenzo, under the figure of Erastus, is forced to occupy the position once held by Horatio; Hieronimo, for the time being, becomes a second Lorenzo, abettor to the treacherous guest; thus Lorenzo falls by the same fate that he visited upon Horatio. Balthazar plays his own part under a new name; he is still the stranger basely seeking the love given to another; but this time he meets the reward due to treachery, slain by the hand of Bell'-Imperia.—The death of Hieronimo, badly mismanaged, is the only real blot upon the artistry of the play. It must be passed over with a sigh of regret, in the same way as we accept, as inexplicable, the 'Out, vile jelly!' of *King Lear*. To seize upon it as typical of the nature of the tragedy would be very unfair.

Hieronimo is the great character of the play. Most of the others are mere continuations, serviceable enough but without improvement, of those in *Jeronimo*, Pedringano being a second edition of Lazarotto. But from the outline sufficient may be gathered to make unnecessary a long analysis of the author's new and greatest creation. We see in it originality of conception; we are touched by its intense humanness and by its inherent simplicity; but we are startled by its change, its growth, under the influence of circumstances, to a certain subtle complexity. All are great qualities, but the last is the greatest. Growth, the reaction of events upon character—not the easily por-

trayed action of character upon events—are the marks by which we recognize the work of the master-artists in characterization. We can guess at the tragic intensity of human sorrow from the difference between the simple-minded little Marshal who acts as Master of the Revels in arranging a 'show' and illustrates his reason for preferring Horatio's claim to be Balthazar's captor by quaint parallels from some old fable, and the arch-deceiver who can converse easily with the Duke of Castile as he fixes up the curtain that is to conceal Horatio's corpse and be the background to the murder of the duke's only son and daughter. Hieronimo's smallest claim to greatness, yet a considerable one, is the fact that he revealed to playwrights the strength and horror of madness on the stage. Of the extent to which Shakespeare made use of this character and certain scenes a reminder may be added. In *Hamlet* is found madness, assumed simplicity, delay in action, the invisible influence of the supernatural, and sacrifice of the avenger's life in the attainment of revenge, besides the ordinarily remembered adoption of an inset play. *King Lear*, in the scene between the king and Edgar on the heath, echoes the scene between Hieronimo and Bazulto.

Humour is absent from the play, unless we extend the courtesy of that name to the grim hoax (explained to us by a chuckling page, who thoroughly enjoys his part in it) practised by Lorenzo upon Pedringano, and the consequently mocking spirit of jest which pervades the hall of judgment during the misguided wretch's trial. The pert confidence of the prisoner, at the foot of the gallows, in the saving contents of a certain box, which the audience knows to be empty, is dramatic irony in its bitterest form.

Hard words have been written about the horrible scenes in the play, as though it were a huddled-up bundle of

bloodshed and ghosts. Such a conception is far from the truth. Horror is an element in almost all powerful tragedies; it is hardly to be separated from any unexpected or violent death. We reject it as monstrous only when its cause is the product of a vile and unnatural motive, or of a motive criminally insufficient to explain the impulse. What is repulsive in *Arden of Feversham*, and in such recognized 'Tragedies of Blood' as have Tourneur, Marston and Webster for their authors, is the utter callousness of the murderers, and their base aims, or disgusting lack of any reasonable excuse for their crimes. When D'Amville pushes his brother over the edge of the quarry, or Antonio stabs the child Julio, or Bosola heaps torments upon the Duchess of Malfi, we turn away with loathing because the deed is either cruelly undeserved or utterly unwarranted by the gain expected from it. Alice Arden's murder of her husband is mainly detestable because her ulterior motive is detestable. Again, the ghosts which Marston and Chapman give us are absurd creatures of 'too, too solid flesh', who will sit on the bed to talk comfortably to one, draw the curtains when one wishes to sleep, or play the scout and call out in warning whenever danger threatens. Kyd does not serve up crime and the supernatural world thus. He shows us terrible things, it is true. But the causes are to be found deep down in the primary impulses of man, in jealousy, in fear, in despair, in blood-revenge. These impulses are not vile; our moral code does not cry out against them as it does against lust, greed, and motiveless cruelty. When we rise from the play it is not with a sense that we have moved amongst base creatures. Lorenzo repels us; but it is Hieronimo who dominates the stage, filling us with pity for his wrongs and weakness. The supernatural remains outside nature, crude, as all stage repre-

sentations of it must be, but unobtrusive (and, in the prologue, at least, thoroughly dignified), serving a useful purpose in keeping before us the imminence of Nemesis biding its appointed hour. It is not easy to suggest how better an insistence upon this lofty *motif* could have been maintained.

If we now revert to our former statement of the essential elements of a successful tragedy we find that each has been included and lifted to a high level in Kyd's masterpiece. The catastrophe is not only overwhelming but greatly just. The figure of Hieronimo has set a new standard in characterization. Scene after scene stamps itself on our memory. And the procrastinating evolution of the plot keeps us in fear, in hope, in uncertainty to the last. If this estimate of the greatness of the play seems exaggerated, we may fairly ask what other tragedy, before its date, combines all four qualities in the same degree of excellence. *Doctor Faustus* and *The Jew of Malta* contain far more wonderful verse, and the former holds within it grander material for tragedy, but as an example of tragic craftmanship *The Spanish Tragedy* is inferior to neither. It can be shown that both suffer very seriously from the neglect of one or more of the four essentials which we have named.

It is only fair to the reader to add that entirely opposite views to those set forth above have been expressed by other writers. Perhaps the most slashing criticism of the play is that by Mr. Courthope.[1]

It remains to illustrate Kyd's verse. In *The Spanish Tragedy* it still clings to the occasional use of rhyme, as in *Jeronimo*. Moreover it is becoming, if anything, more restrained, less spontaneously natural. The weight of tragedy seems to oppress the poetic inspiration, so that it

[1] *History of English Poetry*, ii. p. 424.

rarely ventures outside the limits of melancholy dignity or regulated passion. Kyd's formalism is, unfortunately for him, magnified by its contrast with the superb freedom of the interpolated passages. If we resolutely shut our eyes to these patches of fierce irregularity, we shall be better able to criticize the author's own work by the standard of his contemporaries. The uncertainty of priority in time encourages a comparison between Kyd and Marlowe. It is fairly clear that the former was not much influenced by the latter, or he would have caught the taint of rant and bombast which infected Greene and Peele. If, then, Kyd's blank verse is an original development of the verse of *Gorboduc* and other Senecan plays, and if he is the author of *Jeronimo*—the verse of which, as may have been seen from the quotations offered, is very much freer than that of *The Spanish Tragedy*—he must share some of the honour accorded to Marlowe as the father of dramatic blank verse. The two men are not on the same level as poets. Marlowe's muse soars repeatedly to heights which Kyd's can only reach at rare moments. Nevertheless, a comparison of Kyd's better passages with those of Sackville and Hughes will demonstrate how much blank verse might have owed to his creative spirit had not Marlowe arisen at the same time to eclipse him by his greater genius. Isolated extracts offer a poor criterion, but the following—to be read in conjunction with those selected from *Jeronimo* and *Soliman and Perseda*—will help the reader to form at least an idea of Kyd's originality and ability:

(1)

[ISABELLA *rejects all medicine for her grief.*]

Isabella. So that you say this herb will purge the eye,
And this the head. Ah, but none of them will purge the
heart!

No, there's no medicine left for my disease,
Nor any physic to recure the dead. [*She runs lunatic.*
Horatio! O, where's Horatio?
Maid. Good madam, affright not thus yourself
With outrage for your son Horatio;
He sleeps in quiet in the Elysian fields.
Isabella. Why, did I not give you gowns and goodly things?
Bought you a whistle and a whipstalk[1] too,
To be revenged on their villanies?
Maid. Madam, these humours do torment my soul.
Isabella. My soul, poor soul; thou talk'st of things—
Thou know'st not what: my soul hath silver wings,
That mount me up unto the highest heavens:
To heaven! ay, there sits my Horatio,
Back'd with a troop of fiery cherubims,
Dancing about his newly-healed wounds,
Singing sweet hymns, and chanting heavenly notes,
Rare harmony to greet his innocence,
That died, ay, died a mirror in our days.
But say, where shall I find the men, the murderers,
That slew Horatio? Whither shall I run
To find them out that murdered my son? [*Exeunt.*

(2)

[Hieronimo, *recovering his mental balance, perceives that* Bazulto *is not his son.*]

Ay, now I know thee, now thou nam'st thy son:
Thou art the lively image of my grief;
Within thy face my sorrows I may see:
Thy eyes are gumm'd with tears, thy cheeks are wan,
Thy forehead troubled, and thy muttering lips
Murmur sad words abruptly broken off;
By force of windy sighs thy spirit breathes;
And all this sorrow riseth for thy son.
And selfsame sorrow feel I for my son.
Come in, old man, thou shalt to Isabel;
Lean on my arm; I thee, thou me, shalt stay;

[1] whipstock.

And thou and I, and she, will sing a song,
Three parts in one, but all of discords fram'd.—
Talk not of chords, but let us now be gone,
For with a cord Horatio was slain.

Soliman and Perseda invites little further attention than that which one scene and one character alone demand. Its sharp descent from the tremendous force of *The Spanish Tragedy* is, however, slightly redeemed by the poetic warmth of its love passages. Love is the motive of the plot. Apart from that it sins unforgivably against probability, good taste, reason, and justice. Its reckless distribution of death is such that every one of the fourteen named characters come to a violent end, besides numerous nameless wretches referred to generically as witnesses or executioners. Nor is any attempt made to show just cause for their destruction. We could almost deny that the author of the previous tragedy had any hand in this play, did we not know, on the authority of his own signature, that the same author thought it worth his labour to translate *Cornélie* for the English stage. The fact was that dramatists had not yet the courage always to place their own artistic inclinations above the need of gratifying an unformed public taste, so that the same man may be found composing plays of widely differing natures for, presumably, different audiences.

The single character deserving mention is the boastful knight, Basilisco, whose incredible vaunts and invariable preference for the very freest of blank verse, in a play almost entirely exempt from either, read like an intentional burlesque of *Tamburlaine*. If so, and the suggestion is not ill-founded or improbable, it may be interpreted as an emphatic rejection of the influence of Marlowe and as a claim, on Kyd's part, to sole credit for his own form of tragedy and blank verse.

The only scene of conspicuous merit is that in which the Turkish Emperor, Soliman, attempts to kill his fair captive, Perseda, for rejecting his love, but is overcome by her beauty. It is quite short, but is handled with power and embellished with touches of delicate poetry. The best of it may be quoted here, together with a specimen of the Basilisco burlesque.

(1)

[SOLIMAN'S BASHAW *brings to him the two fairest captives from Rhodes.*]

Soliman. This present pleaseth more than all the rest;
And, were their garments turn'd from black to white,
I should have deem'd them Juno's goodly swans,
Or Venus' milkwhite doves, so mild they are,
And so adorn'd with beauty's miracle.
Here, Brusor, this kind turtle shall be thine;
Take her, and use her at thy pleasure.
But this kind turtle is for Soliman,
That her captivity may turn to bliss.
Fair looks, resembling Phoebus' radiant beams;
Smooth forehead, like the table of high Jove;
Small pencill'd eyebrows, like two glorious rainbows;
Quick lamplike eyes, like heav'n's two brightest orbs;
Lips of pure coral, breathing ambrosy;
Cheeks, where the rose and lily are in combat;
Neck whiter than the snowy Apennines:
A sweeter creature nature never made;
Love never tainted Soliman till now.

. . . . . .

[PERSEDA, *however, will not yield to his amorous proposals.*]

Soliman. Then kneel thee down,
And at my hands receive the stroke of death,
Doom'd to thyself by thine own wilfulness.
Perseda. Strike, strike; thy words pierce deeper than thy blows.

Soliman. Brusor, hide her; for her looks withhold me.
[*Then* BRUSOR *hides her with a veil.*]
O Brusor, thou hast not hid her lips;
For there sits Venus with Cupid on her knee,
And all the graces smiling round about her,
So craving pardon, that I cannot strike.
Brusor. Her face is cover'd over quite, my lord.
Soliman. Why, so. O Brusor, seest thou not
Her milkwhite neck, that alabaster tower?
'Twill break the edge of my keen scimitar,
And pieces, flying back, will wound myself.
Brusor. Now she is all covered, my lord.
Soliman. Why, now at last she dies.
Perseda. O Christ, receive my soul!
Soliman. Hark, Brusor; she calls on Christ:
I will not send her to him. Her words are music,
The selfsame music that in ancient days
Brought Alexander from war to banqueting,
And made him fall from skirmishing to kissing.
No, my dear love would not let me kill thee,
Though majesty would turn desire to wrath:
There lies my sword, humbled at thy feet;
And I myself, that govern many kings,
Entreat a pardon for my rash misdeed.

(2)

[BASILISCO *is asked to declare his country and past achievements.*]

Basilisco. Sooth to say, the earth is my country,
As the air to the fowl or the marine moisture
To the red-gill'd fish. I repute myself no coward,
For humility shall mount; I keep no table
To character my fore passed conflicts.
As I remember, there happened a sore drought
In some part of Belgia, that the juicy grass
Was sear'd with the Sun-God's element.
I held it policy to put the men-children
Of that climate to the sword,

That the mother's tears might relieve the parched earth:
The men died, the women wept, and the grass grew;
Else had my Friesland horse perished,
Whose loss would have more grieved me
Than the ruin of that whole country.

Christopher Marlowe, the greatest of all the University Wits, has been reserved to the last because in his work we rise nearest to the excellence of Shakespearian drama. By the inexhaustible force of his poetic genius he created literature for all time. We read the plays of his contemporaries chiefly for their antiquarian interest; we are pleased to discover in them the first beginnings of many features popular in later productions; one or two appeal to us by their own beauty or strength, but the majority are remembered only for their relationship to greater plays. This is not so with Marlowe's works. Having once been so fortunate as to have had our attention directed to them, we return again and again for the sheer joy of reading his glorious outbursts of poetry, of being thrilled with the intensity of his greater scenes.

Marlowe placed upon the stage men who live intensely, terrible men, for the most part, endued with surpassing power for good or evil. Around them he grouped hostile, enchaining circumstances, which they confront fearlessly and, for a time perhaps, master, until the hour comes when they can no longer conquer. Their lips he touched with a live coal from the altar of his muse, so that their words fire the heart with their flaming zeal or sear it with their despair. In the dramas of Peele we lamented the weakness of his characters, his inability to provide a dominant central figure for his action; we also saw how something of the same weakness softened his verse almost to effeminacy. Greene drew the outline of his characters

more strongly. But Marlowe alone possessed the power, in its fullest degree, of projecting himself into his chief character, of filling it with his own driving force, his own boundless imagination, his own consuming passion and profound capacity for gloomy emotion. Each of his first three plays—counting the two parts of *Tamburlaine* as one play—is wholly given up to the presentment of one man; his tongue speaks on nearly every page, his purpose is the mainspring of almost every action; by mere bulk he fills our mental view as we read, and by the fervour, the poetry of his language, he burns the impression of himself upon our memory. It is not by what they do that we remember Marlowe's heroes or villains. Their deeds probably fade into indistinctness. Few of us quite remember what were Tamburlaine's conquests, or Faustus's wonder-workings, or Barabas's crimes. But we know that if we would recall a mighty conqueror our recollections will revive the image of the Scythian shepherd; if we would picture a soul delivered over to the torments of the lost there will rush back upon us that terrible outcry of Faustus when the fatal hour is come; if we would imagine the feelings of one for whom wealth is the joy, the meaning, the whole of life, we shall recite one of the speeches of Barabas.

Marlowe masters us by his poetry, and is lifted by it above his fellows, reaching to the pedestal on which Shakespeare stands alone. It is an astonishing thing to pass from the dramas which occupied our attention in the previous chapter to one of Marlowe's, and then realize that his were written first. Whereas before it was a matter of difficulty to find passages beautiful enough to quote, it now becomes a problem to select the best. It has been said, indeed, that he is too poetical for a dramatist, but a very little consideration of the plays of Shakespeare

will tell us how much the greatest dramatic productions owe to poetry. When, therefore, we say that Marlowe's greatness as a dramatist depends on his poetry, that outside his poetry his best known work reveals almost every kind of weakness, we have not denied his claim to be the greatest of Shakespeare's predecessors. Into indifferent material poetry can breathe that quickening flame without which the most dramatic situations fail to satisfy. Marlowe had a supreme gift for creating moments, sometimes extended to whole scenes; he had to learn, from repeated failures, the art of creating plays.

Essentially a man of tragic temperament, if we may venture to peer through the printed page to the author, Marlowe lacked the sense of humour. This has been cast up against him as a serious weakness; but it is possible that just here lies the strength of his contribution to drama. His work in literature was to set a standard in the portrayal of deep emotions, and it may have been as well that the first models (*Doctor Faustus* excepted) should not be weakened by apparent inconsistencies.

The list of Marlowe's dramas is as follows: The First and Second Parts of *Tamburlaine* (possibly before 1587), *Doctor Faustus* (1588), *The Jew of Malta* (? 1588–90), *The Massacre at Paris* (about 1590), *Edward the Second* (about 1590), *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (printed 1549). Fortunately for the reader, he can now obtain a volume containing all these plays in one of the cheap modern editions of the English classics. There will, therefore, be no attempt here to provide the details of plots with which every student of drama is doubtless well acquainted. A limited number of quotations, however, are supplied for the pleasure of the reader.

The First and Second Parts of *Tamburlaine the Great* may be discussed together, although they did not appear

together, the second owing its existence to the immediate success of the first. Nevertheless there is such unbroken continuity in their representation of the career of the hero, and their style is so uniform, that it will be more convenient to refer to them conjointly under the one title. Reference has already been made to this famous production in the early portion of our discussion of Greene's work. The reader will recall what was said there of its contents, its popularity and influence, and of the meaning of the term Marlowesque, an adjective referring more directly to *Tamburlaine* than to any other of Marlowe's plays. It is in this play that our ears are dinned almost beyond sufferance by the poet's 'high astounding terms', that the hero most nearly 'with his uplifted forehead strikes the sky': incredible victories are won, the vilest cruelties practised; vast empires are shaken to their foundations, kings are overthrown and new ones crowned as easily as the wish is expressed; everywhere pride calls unto pride with the noise of its boastings. There is no plot, unless we give that name to a succession of battles, pageants and camp scenes. There is not the least attempt at characterization: in their glorious moments Bajazeth, the Soldan of Egypt, Orcanes are indistinguishable from the Scythian shepherd himself. The popularity of *Tamburlaine* was not won by fine touches, but by spectacular magnificence, by the pomp and excitement of war, and by the thrills of responsive pride and boastfulness awakened in the hearers by the convincing magniloquence of the speeches. This was possibly the first appearance upon the public stage of matured drama as opposed to the moralities and interludes. Udall and Still wrote for school and college audiences; Sackville, Edwards, Hughes and their compeers presented their plays at court; so did Lyly; and it was there that *The Arraignment of Paris* was acted. But Marlowe, like

Kyd, laid his work before a larger, more unsophisticated audience, unrolling before its astonished gaze the full sweep of a five act play, crowded with warriors, headlong in its changes of fortune, and irresistible in its 'drum and trumpet' appeal to man's fighting instincts. From men of humble birth, in that age of adventure and romance, the victorious career of the Scythian shepherd won instant applause; with him they too seemed to rise; they shared in his glory, exulted with him in the chariot drawn by kings, forgave his savage massacres, and echoed his vaunts.

Yet there is something beyond all this, which has a lasting value, and appeals to the modern world as it appealed to Elizabethan England. Through the smoke of 'frantic boast and foolish word' may be discerned the fiery core of an idealized human grandeur. Breathing the intoxicating air of the Renaissance, Marlowe conceives man equal to his loftiest ideals, able to climb to the highest point of his thoughts. Choosing imperial conquest as the most striking theme he bids the shepherd aim at a throne, then bears him on the wings of unwavering resolution straight to his goal. The creation of Tamburlaine is the apotheosis of man on the earth. In such words as these does the conqueror announce his equality with the gods:

> The god of war resigns his room to me,
> Meaning to make me general of the world:
> Jove, viewing me in arms, looks pale and wan,
> Fearing my power should pull him from his throne.

These are wild words, chosen from a passage of ridiculous bombast. But the author, magnificent in his optimism, believed in the thought beneath the imagery. The same idea in different guises proclaims itself aloud throughout the play. Sometimes it chooses simple

language, sometimes it is clothed in expressions of noble dignity, most often it hurls itself abroad in foaming rant. But everywhere the message is the same, that man's power is equal to the achievement of the aspiration planted within his breast, and that, to realize himself, he must follow it, with undivided effort, until it is reached. Tamburlaine, contemplating the possibility of kingship, says,

> Why, then, Casane, shall we wish for aught
> The world affords in greatest novelty,
> And rest attemptless, faint, and destitute?
> Methinks we should not.

Two scenes later, in the hour of triumph, he utters these fine lines, which may be accepted as Marlowe's most deliberate statement of his message:

> Nature, that framed us of four elements
> Warring within our breasts for regiment,[1]
> Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds:
> Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend
> The wondrous architecture of the world,
> And measure every wandering planet's course,
> Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
> And always moving as the restless spheres,
> Will us to wear ourselves, and never rest,
> Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
> That perfect bliss and sole felicity,
> The sweet fruition of an earthly crown.

We have used the extreme superlative, but in reality a point just below it should have been struck. For the dramatist, sending his imagination beyond earth to heaven, reserves one peak unscalable in the ascent of man towards the summit of his aspirations.

There is one potentate whom even Tamburlaine cannot overcome—Death. Zenocrate dies, nor will 'cavalieros

[1] rule.

higher than the clouds', nor cannon to 'batter the shining palace of the sun, and shiver all the starry firmament', restore her. Tamburlaine himself must die, defiantly, it may be, yielding nothing through cowardice, but as certainly as time must pass and age must come. Techelles seeks to encourage him with the hope that his illness will not last. But he brushes the deception aside with scorn.

> Not last, Techelles! no, for I shall die.
> See where my slave, the ugly monster Death,
> Shaking and quivering, pale and wan for fear,
> Stands aiming at me with his murdering dart,
> Who flies away at every glance I give,
> And, when I look away, comes stealing on!—
> Villain, away, and hie thee to the field!
> I and mine army come to load thy back
> With souls of thousand mangled carcasses.—
> Look, where he goes! but see, he comes again
> Because I stay!

When we consider *Doctor Faustus* we shall see the same thought. In electing to follow his desires to the uttermost Faustus reaps the reward but also incurs the punishment of all who choose the upper road of complete self-expression. He approaches the last gate, confident that his strength will suffice to open it; he finds it locked and keyless. In that hour of bitter disappointment that which is withheld seems more desirable than the total of all that has preceded it.

The dramatic greatness of *Tamburlaine* lies in the perfect harmony of the central figure with the general purpose of the play. Marlowe sought to present a world conqueror and he creates no less a man. Outwardly the shepherd is formed in a mould of strength and grace; his countenance might serve as a model for a bust of Achilles. Inwardly his mind is full of towering ambition, supported by courage and inflexible resolution. Those who meet

him are profoundly impressed with a sense of his power. Theridamas murmurs in awe to himself, 'His looks do menace heaven and dare the gods.' Menaphon reports, 'His lofty brows in folds do figure death.' Cosroe describes him as 'His fortune's master and the king of men.' His own speeches and actions reveal no unsuspected flaw, no unworthy weakness; rather they almost defeat their own purpose by their exaggeration of his greatness. It would be possible to show by numerous quotations how Marlowe has everywhere selected epithets and imagery of magnitude to enhance the impressiveness of his hero in proportion to his astounding achievements. We will be content with only one more. It describes Tamburlaine's attitude towards those that resist him, and, by its slow, measured intensification of colour to a terrible climax, forces home resistlessly the suggestion of invincible power and relentlessness.

The first day when he pitcheth down his tents,
White is their hue, and on his silver crest
A snowy feather spangled-white he bears,
To signify the mildness of his mind,
That, satiate with spoil, refuseth blood:
But, when Aurora mounts the second time,
As red as scarlet is his furniture;
Then must his kindled wrath be quenched with blood,
Not sparing any that can manage arms:
But, if these threats move not submission,
Black are his colours, black pavilion;
His spear, his shield, his horse, his armour, plumes
And jetty feathers menace death and hell;
Without respect of sex, degree or age,
He razeth all his foes with fire and sword.

Much has been said of Marlowe's poetry. His originality in the use of blank verse has probably been overestimated. Quite good blank verse had been used in

drama some years before his plays were written. *Gorboduc*, the 1572 version of *Tancred and Gismunda*, and at least two long speeches in *The Arraignment of Paris* arise in one's mind as containing very creditable examples of it. Moreover it would be wrong to suppose that this earlier blank verse was always stilted and cut up into end-stopt lines and unrhymed couplets. True, the overflow of one line into another was not common, but neither is it so in *Tamburlaine*. Marlowe accepts the end-stopt line almost as naturally as did his predecessors. Overflow may be found in *Gorboduc*. The following passage from *Tancred and Gismunda* is worth quoting to show how far liberty in this respect had been recognized by 1572.

[TANCRED *protests against any second marriage of his young widowed daughter,* GISMUNDA.]

Sister, I say, . . .
Forbear, and wade no farther in this speech.
Your words are wounds. I very well perceive
The purpose of this smooth oration:
This I suspected, when you first began
This fair discourse with us. Is this the end
Of all our hopes, that we have promised
Unto ourself by this her widowhood?
Would our dear daughter, would our only joy,
Would she forsake us? would she leave us now,
Before she hath clos'd up our dying eyes,
And with her tears bewail'd our funeral?
No other solace doth her father crave
But, whilst the fates maintain his dying life,
Her healthful presence gladsome to his soul,
Which rather than he willing would forego,
His heart desires the bitter taste of death.

If the reader will refer to the extract from Diana's speech he will see how completely free Peele was from

any inherited bondage of the couplet measure. It is not easy to define exactly what Marlowe did give to blank verse. His famous Prologue to the First Part of *Tamburlaine* makes it quite clear that the general public were indebted to him for the introduction of blank verse upon their unpolished stage, it having previously been heard only at court or at the universities. But while this attempt on his part to displace the 'jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits' by the mere roll and crash of his 'high astounding terms' was a courageous step, it cannot be counted for originality in the development of the verse itself. Two features of his verse, however, are original and of his own creation. The first, its conversational ease and freedom, will be found more perfectly developed in *Doctor Faustus* and the later tragedies. Tamburlaine and the other mighty kings, emperors and captains have little skill in converse; when they speak they orate. This is true of the speeches in the earlier plays. Peele's are long monologues, and when Sackville's or Wilmot's characters discourse it is in the fashion of a set debate. Faustus and Mephistophilis, on the other hand, meet in real conversation, and it is in their question and answer that the flexibility and naturalness of blank verse are shown to advantage for the first time by Marlowe. The second feature is the infusion of pure poetry into drama. Hitherto the opinion seems to have held that dramatic verse must keep as close to prose as possible in order to combine the grace of rhythm with the solid common-sense of ordinary human speech. Nothing illustrates this more remarkably than a comparison of Sackville's poetry in his Induction to the *Mirror for Magistrates* with his verse in *Gorboduc*. We have remarked before on the tendency of all Senecan dramas to sententiousness and argument, than which nothing could be less poetical.

The poetry of *The Arraignment of Paris*, again, is more lyrical than dramatic, harmonizing with the general approximation of that play to the nature of a masque. Marlowe was the first to demonstrate that imagination could riot madly in a wealth of imagery, or soar far above the realms of logic and cold philosophy to summon beautiful and terrible pictures out of the cloud-land of fancy, without losing hold upon earth and the language of mortals. He knew that the unspoken language of the impassioned heart is charged with poetry, however the formality of utterance, the fear of derision and the unreadiness of our vocabulary may freeze its expression on our lips; and he trusted to the hearts of his hearers to understand and appreciate the intense humanness of the feelings that forced themselves to the surface in that form. Nor was he mistaken. His 'raptures' are more truly natural, more sympathetic and truthful expressions of human emotion than the most stately and reasonable declamations of those earlier writers who clung to what they believed to be natural. Often quoted as it has been, Drayton's eulogy of Marlowe may be quoted again—it merits a place in every discussion of Marlowe's verse—as the finest appreciation of his poetry.

> Next Marlowe, bathed in the Thespian springs,
> Had in him those brave translunary things
> That the first poets had; his raptures were
> All air and fire, which made his verses clear;
> For that fine madness still he did retain,
> Which rightly should possess a poet's brain.
> (*An Elegy: Of Poets and Poesie.*)

From *Tamburlaine* one could extract passages to illustrate Marlowe's fondness for classical allusions, his use—Miltonic, if we may anticipate the term—of the sonorous effect of names, his introduction of sustained similes, his

trick of repeating a sound at intervals (a trick borrowed by Greene later), his habit of letting a speaker refer to himself in the third person (Tamburlaine loves to boast the greatness of Tamburlaine), and his occasional slovenliness, especially in the insertion of a few lines of prose into the midst of his verse. All these and others are minor features which the student will search out for himself. Some of them, however, may be detected in the following excerpt from the Second Part:

[TAMBURLAINE *is in his chariot drawn by captive kings.* TECHELLES *has just urged that the armies should hasten to the siege of Babylon.*]

Tamburlaine. We will, Techelles.—Forward, then, ye jades!
Now crouch, ye kings of greatest Asia,
And tremble, when ye hear this scourge will come
That whips down cities and controlleth crowns,
Adding their wealth and treasure to my store.
The Euxine sea, north to Natolia;
The Terrene, west; the Caspian, north north-east;
And on the south, Sinus Arabicus;
Shall all be loaden with the martial spoils
We will convey with us to Persia.
Then shall my native city, Samarcanda,
And crystal waves of fresh Jaertis' stream,
The pride and beauty of her princely seat,
Be famous through the furthest continents;
For there my palace royal shall be placed,
Whose shining turrets shall dismay the heavens,
And cast the fame of Ilion's tower to hell:
Thorough the streets, with troops of conquered kings,
I'll ride in golden armour like the sun;
And in my helm a triple plume shall spring,
Spangled with diamonds, dancing in the air,
To note me emperor of the three-fold world;
Like to an almond tree y-mounted high
Upon the lofty and celestial mount

Of ever-green Selinus, quaintly decked
With blooms more white than Erycina's brows,
Whose tender blossoms tremble every one
At every little breath that thorough heaven is blown.
Then in my coach, like Saturn's royal son
Mounted his shining chariot gilt with fire
And drawn with princely eagles through the path
Paved with bright crystal and enchased with stars,
When all the gods stand gazing at his pomp,
So will I ride through Samarcanda-streets,
Until my soul, dissevered from this flesh,
Shall mount the milk-white way and meet him there.
To Babylon, my lords, to Babylon!

The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus sets forth the well-known story of the man who sold his soul to the devil in return for complete gratification of his desires during his life on earth. Something of its fame is due to its association, through its main plot, with Goethe's masterpiece; something may be attributed to the fascination of its theme; something must be granted to the terrible force of one or two scenes. It is hard to believe that its own artistic and dramatic qualities could have secured unaided the reputation which it appears to possess among some critics. More even than *Tamburlaine*, this play hangs upon one central figure. There is no Bajazeth, no Soldan, no Orcanes, no Zenocrate to help to bear the weight of impressiveness. The low characters, who are intended to be humorous, drag the plot down instead of buoying it up. Other figures are hardly more than dummies, unable to excite the smallest interest. Mephistophilis deserves our notice, but his is a shadowy outline removed from humanity. One figure alone stands forth to hold and justify our attention; and he proves himself unfit for the task. Those who insist on tracing one guiding principle in all Marlowe's plays have declared

that Faustus is the personification of 'thirst for knowledge' or of 'intellectual *virtù*', just as Tamburlaine personifies, for them, the 'thirst for power' or 'physical *virtù*'. Surely, if this is so, Marlowe has failed absolutely in his presentment of the character; in which case the play may be condemned out of hand, seeing that the character of Faustus is its all in all. But the more we study Marlowe's other principal figures, the more convinced we become of his absorption in them while they are in the making. With Tamburlaine he himself grows terrible and glorious; the spirit of pride and conquest colours every phrase, speech and description, so that, as we have pointed out, the character of Tamburlaine is masterfully consistent and attuned to the purpose of the play. It is better, then, to examine the character of Faustus, as revealed in his desires, requests, and prominent actions, and thence educe the purpose of the play, than, by deciding upon this purpose, to discover that the central figure is in continual discord with it.

Faustus is introduced to us by the Chorus at the commencement of the play as a scholar of repute, 'glutted now with learning's golden gifts,' and about to turn aside to the study of necromancy. Accordingly he appears in his study rejecting logic as no end in itself, law as servile, medicine because he has exhausted its possible limits, divinity because it tells him that the reward of sin is death. Upon sin his mind is set all the time, so that the reminder from Jerome's Bible annoys him. He flings the book aside because it warns him of what he affects to disbelieve and would be glad to forget. Magic wins him by its unknown possibilities 'of profit and delight, of power, of honour, and omnipotence'.

Lest we should suppose that his choice has anything heroic in it, that he is deliberately accepting a terrible

debt of eternal torment in exchange for what necromancy can give, we are informed that he has no belief in hell or future pain, that to him men's souls are trifles. Deep down in his conscience he has a fear of 'damnation', which only makes itself felt, however, in unexalted moments. Such thoughts are set aside as 'mere old wives' tales' in the triumphant hour of his signing the contract.

With curiosity and longing, then, he enters unshudderingly into a bargain that will give him what he seeks. We can readily discover, from his own lips, what that is. He exults over the prospect of having spirits to do his bidding:

> I'll have them fly to India for gold,
> Ransack the ocean for orient pearl,
> And search all corners of the new-found world
> For pleasant fruits and princely delicates;
> I'll have them read me strange philosophy,
> And tell the secrets of all foreign kings.

Many other things his fancy pictures. But we observe that philosophy stands below wealth and feasting in his wishes. He dismisses Mephistophilis back to Lucifer with this report of himself:

> Say, he surrenders up to him his soul,
> So he will spare him four and twenty years,
> Letting him live in all voluptuousness.

For a moment his enthusiastic outlook upon limitless capacity wakens in him a desire for military glory: he would be 'great emperor of the world', he would 'pass the ocean with a band of men'. But from what we know of his subsequent career he never attempted to win such renown. No; in his heart he confesses,

> The god thou servest is thine own appetite.

Mephistophilis, with a profound and melancholy insight into the reality of things, sees hell in every place where heaven is not. Faustus, on the other hand, with flippant superficiality laughs at the idea. An intellectual, a moral hell is to him incomprehensible.

> Nay, an this be hell, I'll willingly be damned:
> What! sleeping, eating, walking, and disputing!
> But, leaving this, let me have a wife,
> The fairest maid in Germany;
> For I am wanton and lascivious,
> And cannot live without a wife.

Sometimes conscience forces him to listen to its fearful whispers, and then suicide offers its dreadful means as a silencer of their disturbing warnings. Why does he not accept the relief of rope or dagger?

> — Long ere this I should have done the deed,
> Had not sweet pleasure conquered deep despair.
> Have not I made blind Homer sing to me
> Of Alexander's love and Oenon's death?
> And hath not he, that built the walls of Thebes
> With ravishing sound of his melodious harp,
> Made music with my Mephistophilis?
> Why should I die, then, or basely despair?
> I am resolved; Faustus shall not repent.

The mood of fear and regret passes. He plunges back to the gratification of his senses.

> Whilst I am here on earth let me be cloyed
> With all things that delight the heart of man:
> My four-and-twenty years of liberty
> I'll spend in pleasure and in dalliance.

The end is drawing near. Appetite is becoming sated: rarer and rarer delicacies are needed to satisfy his craving.

Repentance!—that is thrust aside, postponed to a later hour.

> One thing, good servant, let me crave of thee,
> To glut the longing of my heart's desire—
> That I may have unto my paramour
> That heavenly Helen which I saw of late,
> Whose sweet embraces may extinguish clean
> Those thoughts that do dissuade me from my vow.

When at last the hour to fulfil his part of the contract arrives, he confesses in bitterness of spirit, 'for the vain pleasure of four-and-twenty years hath Faustus lost eternal joy and felicity.'

This man is not one consumed with a thirst of knowledge. Once he asks Mephistophilis a few questions on astrology; at another time he evinces some curiosity concerning Lucifer and Hell, idle curiosity because he regards it all as foolishness. We are *told* of a journey through the heavens and of voyages about the world, but we *see* him exercising his supernatural gifts in the most puerile and useless fashion. It is impossible, therefore, to regard his ambition as a lust for knowledge in the usual meaning of that term, differentiating it from sensual experience. If Faustus is to be labelled according to his dominant trait, then let us describe him as the embodiment of sense-gratification. He is a sensualist from the moment that he takes up the book of magic and ponders over what it may bring him. A degraded form of him has been sketched in the Syriac scholar of a modern work of fiction, who cherished, side by side with a world-wide reputation for learning, a bestial appetite for profligacy. The message of *Tamburlaine* holds as true in the pursuit of pleasure as in that of conquest. Faustus denies that there is a limit to pleasure, and the horror of his career grows darker as his mounting desires bear him further

and further on, far beyond the reach of less eager minds, to the impassable point whence he may only see the heaven beyond. That point is the hell which once he laughed at as an old wives' tale.

The weakness of *Doctor Faustus* appears exactly where *Tamburlaine* is strongest. In spite of his prodigious boasting and his callous indifference to suffering, Tamburlaine appeals to us most powerfully as the right titanic figure for a world-conqueror; his soul is ever above his body, looking beyond the victory of to-day to the greater conquests of the future: there is nothing sordid or commonplace about him. Unfortunately, though it is given to few of us to be conquerors, it is possible for all of us to gratify our senses if we will. Tamburlaine gathers golden fruit, Faustus plucks berries from the same bush as ourselves: only, he must have them from the topmost boughs. The following passage has probably never been surpassed in its magic idealization of that which is essentially base and carnal:

[*Enter* HELEN, *passing over the stage between two* CUPIDS.]

Faustus. Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?—
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.—[*Kisses her.*]
Her lips suck forth my soul: see, where it flies!—
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena.
I will be Paris, and for love of thee,
Instead of Troy, shall Wittenberg be sacked;
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
And wear thy colours on my plumed crest;
Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
And then return to Helen for a kiss.
O, thou art fairer than the evening air

Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars;
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
When he appeared to hapless Semele;
More lovely than the monarch of the sky
In wanton Arethusa's azured arms;
And none but thou shalt be my paramour!

Poetry such as this has power to blind us for a moment to the underlying meaning: Faustus enjoys a temporary transfiguration. But Marlowe's muse flags in the effort to sublimate dross. Such a character as Faustus is unfitted to support tragedy. His creator inspires him with his own Bohemian joy in mere pleasure, his own thirst for fresh sensations, his own vehement disregard of restraint—a disregard which brought Marlowe to a tragic and unworthy end. But, as if in mockery, he degrades him with unmanly, ignoble qualities that excite our derision. His mind is pleased with toys that would amuse a child: at the conclusion of an almost incredibly trivial Show of the Seven Deadly Sins he exclaims, 'O, how this sight doth delight my soul!' His practical jokes are unworthy of a court jester. The congealing of his blood agitates his superstitious mind far more than the terrible frankness of Mephistophilis. Miserably mean-spirited, he seeks to propitiate the wrath of the fiend by invoking his torments upon an old man whose disinterested appeal momentarily quickened his conscience into revolt. Finally, when we recall the words with which Tamburlaine faced death, what contempt, despite the frightful anguish of the scene, is aroused by Faustus's screams of terror at the approach of Lucifer to claim him as his own! Instinctively we think of Byron's Manfred and his scorn of hell and its furies. It is his cowardice that spoils the effect of the backward glances and twinges of conscience, the intention of which has been rightly praised by so

many. Marlowe probably wished to represent the strife of good and evil in a man's soul. Under other circumstances it is fair to suppose that he would have achieved success, and so have anticipated Goethe. But his Faustus moves on too low a level. Of a moral sense, independent of the dread of punishment, he knows nothing. Four times his Good Angel suggests to him a return to the right path; once an Old Man warns him; twice Mephistophilis says that which might fairly have bid him pause; twice, at least, his own conscience advises repentance. Yet only on two occasions is there any real revolt, and then only because his cowardice has been enlisted on the side of righteousness by the sudden thought of the devils that will tear him in pieces or of the hell that 'claims his right, and with a roaring voice says, "Faustus, come".' In proof of this we see his hesitation scared away by the greater terrors of a present devil, a Lucifer clothed in horror, or a threatening Mephistophilis. In his vacillations we see, not the noble conflict of good and evil impulses, but an ignoble tug-of-war between timidity and appetite.

If Faustus himself falls short of success as a tragic character, if his aspirations are too mean, his qualities too contemptible to win our sympathy save at rare moments of transcendent poetry, what shall be said of the setting provided for the story of his career? Once more we are offered the stale devices of the Moralities, the Good and Bad Angels, the Devil, the Old Man (formerly known as Sage Counsel), the Seven Deadly Sins, Heaven, Hell, and the carefully-pointed moral at the end. Even the Senecan Chorus has been forced into service to tell us of Faustus's early manhood and of the marvellous journeys taken in the intervals. There are no acts, but that is not a great matter; they were added later in the edition of 1616.

What does matter very much is the introduction of stupid scenes of low comedy into which Faustus is dragged to play a common conjuror's part and which almost succeed in shattering the impression of tragic intensity left by the few scenes where poetry triumphs over facts. Here again, however, our criticism of the author is softened by the knowledge that Dekker and Rowley made undefined additions to the play, and may therefore be responsible for the crudities of its humour. Nevertheless, even with this allowance, Marlowe must be blamed for the utter incongruity of so many scenes with high tragedy. The harmony which rules the construction of *Tamburlaine*, giving it a lofty coherence and consistency, is lamentably absent from *Doctor Faustus*.

Doctor Faustus is not a great play. Yet it will never be forgotten. Though mismanaged, it has the elements of a tremendous tragedy. In discerning the suitability of the Teutonic legend for this purpose Marlowe showed a far truer understanding of what tragedy should be, of the superior terrors of moral over material downfall, than he displayed in his more successful later tragedy.

Most of the poetry is of a less fiery kind, it flares less, than the poetry of *Tamburlaine*. There is also more use of prose. But at least two purple passages exist to give immortality to Faustus's passion and despair. The first has already been quoted at length. The second is the even more famous soliloquy, the terror-stricken outcry rather, of Faustus in his last hour of life. With frightful realism it confirms the fiend's scornful prophecy of a scene of 'desperate lunacy', when his labouring brain will beget 'a world of idle fantasies to overreach the devil, but all in vain'.

Marlowe's adaptation of blank verse to natural conversation has been spoken of as one of his contributions to the

art of dramatic poetry. The following passage illustrates this:

[*The compact has just been signed.*]

Meph. Speak, Faustus; do you deliver this as your deed?
Faustus. Ay, take it, and the devil give thee good of it!
Meph. So, now, Faustus, ask me what thou wilt.
Faustus. First I will question with thee about hell.
Tell me, where is the place that men call hell?
Meph. Under the heavens.
Faustus. Ay, so are all things else; but whereabouts?
Meph. Within the bowels of these elements,
Where we are tortured and remain for ever.
Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed
In one self-place; but where we are is hell,
And where hell is, there must we ever be:
And, to be short, when all the world dissolves,
And every creature shall be purified,
All places shall be hell that are not heaven.
Faustus. I think hell's a fable.
Meph. Ay, think so still, till experience change thy mind.
Faustus. Why, dost thou think that Faustus shall be damned?
Meph. Ay, of necessity, for here's the scroll
In which thou hast given thy soul to Lucifer.
Faustus. Ay, and body too; and what of that?
Thinkest thou that Faustus is so fond to imagine
That, after this life, there is any pain?
No, these are trifles and mere old wives' tales.
Meph. But I am an instance to prove the contrary,
For I tell thee I am damned and now in hell.
Faustus. Nay, an this be hell, I'll willingly be damned.

The Jew of Malta repeats the fundamental failure of *Doctor Faustus*, but partially redeems it by avoiding its errors of construction. In this play the dramatist has recovered his sense of harmony: he places his central

figure in circumstances that befit him, and maintains a consistent balance between the strength of his character and the nature of his deeds. The Jew does nothing that really jars on our conception of him as a great villain. Nor in the minor scenes is there anything to disturb the general impression of darkness. The gentleness of Abigail, whose love and obedience alone draw her into the net of crime, only makes her surroundings appear more cruel; while the introduction of the Governor, the Grand Seignior's son, and a Vice-Admiral of Spain raises the level of wickedness to something like dignified rank. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the play is fundamentally unsound. True tragedy should present more than a great change between the first and last scenes; the change should be lamentable. We should feel that a much better ending might, and would, have come but for the circumstance that forms the crisis, or for other circumstances at the beginning of the play. If we consider such tragic careers as those of Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth and Othello we recognize that each might have come to a different conclusion if it had not been for the blight of a father's death or a single act of folly, of ambition or jealousy. These men all excite our sympathy, especially Hamlet, whose tragedy is due not at all to himself but to the overshadowing of another's crime. Macbeth and Othello are each introduced as men of the noblest qualities, with one flaw which events have not yet revealed. But Barabas the Jew is deliberately painted as vile. We learn from his own lips of previous villany atrocious enough in itself, without any of his subsequent crimes, to justify his horrible fate. Moreover, he does not actually lose his wealth. If that were all swept away we could understand resentment boiling up into savage hate. But the truth is, he is so little

hurt financially that soon after the confiscation of his goods he is able to say:

> In spite of these swine-eating Christians . . .
> Am I become as wealthy as I was.
> They hoped my daughter would ha' been a nun;
> But she's at home, and I have bought a house
> As great and fair as is the governor's.

Hence his action against the governor's son, Lodowick, is inexcusably vindictive, quite apart from the vile share in it which he forces upon his daughter. The nunnery crime, again, is monstrous in its gross injustice to Abigail's constancy and in its Herodian comprehensiveness. After this his other murders and intrigues seem more justified. The two friars, his servant Ithamore and the rest can well be spared by any exit; his betrayal of the town is not unreasonable, considering the treatment meted out to him within it; and his proposed second treachery is based on sound policy.—We may observe, in passing, that the self-righteous governor takes no steps to prevent, by a timely warning, the massacre of the enemy's soldiers, availing himself of the atrocity, instead, to secure a victory for his side.—Consequently, when the final doom does fall upon Barabas, we have begun to be vaguely doubtful whether it is altogether deserved. Yet we feel that it is impossible to let him live. Thus the conclusion, however horrible spectacularly, neither excites pity for the Jew nor entirely satisfies justice. Barabas is victimized by the governor at the beginning of the play; it seems hardly fair that the two men should occupy the same relative positions at the end. It may be urged that the early scenes do present Barabas as meriting our pity, that our compassion does go out to him in his oppression. But the sympathy that is won at first is falsely won by the prominence given to his distress

when he *fears* all is lost: touched by the pain caused by the governor's injustice, we almost overlook the recovery effected by the Jew's cunning.

If we look for passages of tragic intensity we find a splendid hope weakening to dreary disappointment. The whole of the first act and the opening scene of the second act ring true to tragedy. Nothing could be better planned than the swift transition from the golden harvesting of wealth to its confiscation by the state. The contrast, too, between the dignified resistance of Barabas and the weak surrender of his companions artistically emphasizes the former's splendid isolation. For the brief scene in which the Jew, haunting the vicinity of the nunnery like 'ghosts that glide by night about the place where treasure hath been hid', regains his bags of gold and precious jewels, no praise can be too high. After that, however, the ennobling mantle of human sorrow and pain falls away; the crimes that follow are hideous in their nakedness—murders or massacres, nothing more. Not the least attempt is made to enlist our sympathy for any one of the murdered, except Abigail. If we are asked, then, to define the true nature of the play, we shall call it not a tragedy proper, in the sense in which *Macbeth* is a tragedy, but rather a narrative play presenting the criminal career of a villain acting under provocation. As has been well pointed out by Mr. Baker in his *Development of Shakespeare*, there is a difference between 'the tragic' and 'tragedy'. We might describe *The Jew of Malta* as a tragic narrative play.

In characterization Marlowe has made a distinct advance. With the creation of Barabas he brings upon the stage a person of many commanding qualities. The Jew is great in his own terrible way. He is far-seeing, bold, subtle, relentless. He loves his daughter much, his gold

immeasurably. Tempests of emotion shake his frame when restraint is thrown aside. But at need he can be calm and conciliatory in the face of intense annoyance and blustering threats. In the hour of death he is own brother to defiant Tamburlaine. The points of resemblance between him and Shylock may be searched out by any curious student: the reality of the likeness, scoffed at by a few whose admiration for Shakespeare is inclined to prejudice their judgment, has been effectively demonstrated by Professor Ward.[1] It would be an interesting exercise to pursue Professor Ward's hint at the insincerity of the Jew's recital to Ithamore of his early crimes. We might work back to an initial conception of Barabas as an upright merchant, and so discover a real tragedy in the moral downfall which results from the governor's injustice. Such a point of view is attractive, and would raise the character of the play considerably. But it has many obstacles in its way, not the least being the Machiavellian prologue and the difficulty of believing that any dramatist of the sixteenth century would wish, or dare, to present to an English audience the picture of an honest, ill-treated Jew. The confiscation which we regard as an injustice was probably viewed in that day as an eminently sound and Christian act of political economy.

Leaving Abigail and Ithamore to the liking or loathing of readers of the play, we hasten to conclude this discussion with examples of Marlowe's verse. His poetry is once more the refining element, beautifying the ugly, ennobling the mean, a vein of gold in the quartz. Having grown more generous since the days of *Doctor Faustus*, the poet scatters gems with lavish hand throughout the play. Rhymes begin to appear, as though he scorned to

[1] *English Dramatic Literature*, i, p. 188.

seem dependent upon blank verse alone. Extensive as is the choice, it is impossible, in fairness to those readers who have not the play, to omit entirely the often-quoted opening scene of the second act. After it, however, we quote a passage which, almost more than the other, illustrates the purifying influence of the author's imagination: the fact that it is partly in rhyme gives it an additional interest.

(1)

[BARABAS *wanders in the streets about his old home where his treasure lies concealed.*]

Barabas. Thus, like the sad-presaging raven, that tolls
The sick man's passport in her hollow beak,
And in the shadow of the silent night
Doth shake contagion from her sable wings,
Vexed and tormented runs poor Barabas
With fatal curses towards these Christians.
The incertain pleasures of swift-footed time
Have ta'en their flight, and left me in despair;
And of my former riches rests no more
But bare remembrance; like a soldier's scar,
That has no further comfort for his maim. . . .
Now I remember those old women's words,
Who in my wealth would tell me winter's tales,
And speak of spirits and ghosts that glide by night
About the place where treasure hath been hid:
And now methinks that I am one of those;
For, whilst I live, here lives my soul's sole hope,
And, when I die, here shall my spirit walk.

(2)

[BELLAMIRA, *a courtesan, and* ITHAMORE, *a cut-throat slave from Thrace, are together.*]

Bell. Now, gentle Ithamore, lie in my lap.—
Where are my maids? provide a cunning banquet;
Send to the merchant, bid him bring me silks;
Shall Ithamore, my love, go in such rags?

Ithamore. And bid the jeweller come hither too.
Bell. I have no husband; sweet, I'll marry thee.
Ithamore. Content: but we will leave this paltry land,
And sail from hence to Greece, to lovely Greece;—
I'll be thy Jason, thou my golden fleece;—
Where painted carpets o'er the meads are hurled,
And Bacchus' vineyards overspread the world;
Where woods and forests go in goodly green;—
I'll be Adonis, thou shalt be Love's Queen;—
The meads, the orchards, and the primrose-lanes,
Instead of sedge and reed, bear sugar-canes:
Thou in those groves, by Dis above,
Shalt live with me and be my love.
Bell. Whither will I not go with gentle Ithamore?

The Massacre at Paris is a poor play and therefore need not detain us long. Its only interest is in its attempt to represent quite recent events (1572–89). As a history play it manages to reproduce the French atmosphere of distrust, rivalry, intrigue and indiscriminate massacre, but at the expense of unity. The hurried succession of scenes leads us blindly to an unexpected conclusion: from first almost to last no indication is given that the consummation aimed at is the ascent of Navarre to the throne of France. Rarely has the merely chronological principle been adhered to with so little meaning. Navarre, whose marriage opens the play and whose triumph closes it, might be expected to figure largely as the upholder of Protestantism in opposition to Guise; instead he is relegated to quite a subordinate part. Anjou, again, the later opponent of Guise, makes a very belated bid for our favour after displaying a brutality equal to his rival's in the massacre. The author is careful to paint Catherine in truly inky blackness. But the only character which we are likely to remember is the Duke of Guise. Yet his portrait is of inferior workmanship. The murders by which he tries to reach the throne are

too treacherous to be ranked in the grander scale of crime. Even the vastness of his organized massacre is belittled for us by the stage presentment of individual assassination in which Guise himself plays a butcher's part. Greatness is more often attributed to outward aloofness and inactivity than to busy participation in the execution of a plot. Moreover, it was a tactical error to give prominence to the personal quarrel between Guise and Mugeroun, for it dissipates upon a private matter the force which, devoted to an exalted ambition, might have been impressive. However, there are one or two touches which give a cold grandeur to this character and seem half to anticipate the Mortimer of the next play. The following lines are taken from the second scene of the first act—there are only three acts altogether:

Guise. Now Guise begins those deep-engendered thoughts
To burst abroad, those never-dying flames
Which cannot be extinguished but by blood.
Oft have I levelled, and at last have learned
That peril is the chiefest way to happiness,
And resolution honour's fairest aim.
What glory is there in a common good,
That hangs for every peasant to achieve?
That like I best, that flies beyond my reach.
Set me to scale the high Pyramides,
And thereon set the diadem of France;
I'll either rend it with my nails to naught,
Or mount the top with my aspiring wings,
Although my downfall be the deepest hell. . . .
Give me a look, that, when I bend the brows,
Pale death may walk in furrows of my face;
A hand that with a grasp may gripe the world;
An ear to hear what my detractors say;
A royal seat, a sceptre, and a crown;
That those which do behold them may become
As men that stand and gaze against the sun.

Edward the Second is undoubtedly Marlowe's masterpiece. It marks the elevation of the Chronicle History Play to its highest possibilities, and is, at the same time, a deeply moving tragedy. One wonders how Peele could write the medley of incongruous and ill-connected scenes which we know under the abbreviated title of *Edward the First* after having once seen his rival's 'history' acted. For the strength of Marlowe's play lies in its concentration upon the figure of the king and its skilful omission of details not dramatically helpful. If there were any balance of advantage in the choice of subject one must feel that it did not lie with the earlier writer, who was undertaking the extremely difficult task of presenting an inglorious monarch sympathetically without allowing him to appear contemptible. We can imagine how magnificently he could have set forth the masterful career of Edward I. His courage in attempting a character less congenial to his natural temperament deserved the success it achieved. The Tamburlaine element is not withheld; the fierce baron, young Mortimer, inherits that conqueror's ambitious nature, and fully maintains the great traditions of strength, pride and defiance. But Mortimer is only the second figure in order of importance. Upon the king Marlowe pours all the fruits of his experience in dramatic work.

From the historical point of view the dramatist is signally successful in making the men of the past live over again. His weak monarch is more intensely human than any mightier, more kingly ruler would probably have been in his hands. And the barons, in their haughtiness and easy aptitude for revolt, are, to the life, the fierce men whose grandfathers and fathers in turn fought against their sovereigns and whose descendants fell in the fratricidal Wars of the Roses. Moreover the chronicle of the

reign is followed with reasonable accuracy, if we make due allowance for dramatic requirements. It can hardly be said that the author's representation of Edward is impartial: a kindly veil is drawn over the lawlessness of his government and the disgrace brought upon English arms by his military incapacity. But the political intrigue, the friction between monarch and subjects, the helplessness of the king to enforce his wishes, are all brought back vividly.

However, it is Marlowe's adaptation of a historical subject to a loftier purpose than the mere renewal of the past which gives real greatness to the play. Here at last his work attains to the full stature and noble harmony of a tragedy, not on the highest level, it is true, but dignified and moving. The catastrophe is physical, not moral, and thus the play lacks the awful horror half-revealed in *Doctor Faustus.* But whereas the latter, reaching after the greatest things, falls short of success, *Edward the Second,* content with less, easily secures a first place in the second rank.

By a neat device we are introduced, at the outset, to the king, his favourite, and the fatal choice from which springs all the misery of the reign. For the opening lines, spoken by Gaveston himself, are no less than the royal message bidding him return to 'share the kingdom' with his friend. From that point the first portion of the play easily unfolds: it deals with the strife, the brief triumphs and the bitter defeats which fill the eventful period of this ill-starred friendship. The actual crisis falls within the third act: it is marked by the murder of Gaveston and the resolution of the king at last to offer armed resistance to the tyranny of the barons. The oath by which he seals his decision is royally impressive.

[*Kneeling*] By earth, the common mother of us all,
By heaven, and all the moving orbs thereof,
By this right hand, and by my father's sword,
And all the honours 'longing to my crown,
I will have heads and lives for him as many
As I have manors, castles, towns and towers!

From that oath is born the catastrophe that immediately ensues. A temporary victory, followed up by revengeful executions, is succeeded by defeat, captivity, loss of the crown, and a fearful death.

King Edward is not portrayed as weak mentally or morally. Gaveston, in the first scene, speaks of his master's effeminacy, and on more than one occasion there are hints from the royal favourites that the king should assert his majesty more vigorously. But over and over again Edward breaks out into anger at the insolence of his subjects and only fails to crush them through the impossibility of exacting obedience from those about him. In Act I, Scene 4, it is Mortimer's order for the seizure of Gaveston that is obeyed, not the king's command for Mortimer's arrest. When the warrant for his minion's exile is submitted to him, the king refuses point blank, in the face of threatening insistence. 'I will not yield', he cries; 'curse me, depose me, do the worst you can.' He only gives way at last before a threat of papal excommunication, the crushing power of which had been made abundantly clear by its effect on King John just a century before. Indeed we need not go further than the first scene to find that Marlowe is resolved to put the right spirit of wilfulness and angry determination in his fated monarch. There we find this speech by him:

Well, Mortimer, I'll make thee rue these words;
Beseems it thee to contradict thy king?
Frownest thou thereat, aspiring Lancaster?

> This sword shall plane the furrows of thy brows,
> And hew these knees that now are grown so stiff.
> I will have Gaveston ; and you shall know
> What danger 'tis to stand against your king.

And again, when the barons have withdrawn, he bursts out—

> I cannot brook these haughty menaces ;
> Am I a king, and must be over-ruled !—
> Brother, display my ensigns in the field :
> I'll bandy with the barons and the earls,
> And either die or live with Gaveston.

Nor is this pride of sovereignty lost even in defeat. We see it still as strong, though forced by circumstances and coaxed to give way, in the pathetic scene where he is compelled to surrender his crown to Mortimer's delegate. Nevertheless the weakness that brings and justifies his downfall is placed prominently before us from the first. King Edward prefers his own pleasure before the unity of his kingdom and the strength of his rule. There is even something a little ignoble in his love for Gaveston, something unmanly and contemptible, if the reports of such prejudiced persons as the queen and Mortimer are to be believed. But the fault is not a criminal or unnatural one. One can sympathize with a heart that yearns for the presence of a single friend in a world of cold-blooded critics or harsh counsellors. The not unattractive character of Gaveston, too, affectionate, gay, proud, quick-tempered, brave—with faults also, of deceit, vanity and vindictiveness—preserves the royal friendship from the sink of blind dotage upon an unworthy creature. The tragedy follows, then, from the king's preferment of private above public good, or, we may say, from the conflict between the king's wishes as a man and his duty as a monarch. It is to Marlowe's perception of this vital

struggle underlying the hostility between King Edward and his nobles that the play owes its greatness. We pity the king, we can hate those who beat him down to the mire, because his fault appeals to us in its personal aspect as almost a virtue; he is willing to sacrifice so much to keep his friends. At the same time we perceive the justice of his dethronement, for we recognize that the duty of a king must take precedence over everything else. He has brought his punishment upon himself. Yet, inasmuch as Mortimer, serviceable to the state as an instrument, offends our sense of what is due from a subject to his sovereign, we applaud the justice of his downfall; we, perhaps, secretly rejoice that this bullying young baron is humbled beneath a king's displeasure at last. As a final touch Marlowe rescues the sovereignty of the throne from the taint of weakness by the little prince's vigorous assertion of his authority at the end.

Queen Isabella presents certain difficulties. The king's treatment of her reflects little credit upon him, although one can hardly demand the same affection in a political as in a voluntary union. Apparently she really loves the king until his continued coldness chills her feelings and drives them to seek return in the more responsive heart of Mortimer. After that she even sinks so low as to wish the king dead. Yet to the end she cherishes a warm love for her son. Probably the author intended that her degeneracy should be attributed to the baneful influence of Mortimer and so strengthen the need for his death.

Mortimer, as the great antagonist, has a very strong character. Imperious, fiery, he is the real leader of the barons. From the first it is apparent that he is actuated by personal malice as much as by righteous indignation on behalf of his misgoverned country. He confides to

his uncle that it is Gaveston's and the king's mocking jests at the plainness of his train and attire which make him impatient. But the unwisdom of the king serves him for a stalking-horse while secretly he pursues the goal of his private ambition. In adversity he is uncrushed. When he returns victorious he ruthlessly sweeps aside all likely obstacles to his supremacy, the Spensers, Kent, and even the king being hurried to their death. Then, just as he thinks to stand at the summit, he falls—and falls grandly.

> Base Fortune, now I see that in thy wheel
> There is a point, to which when men aspire,
> They tumble headlong down: that point I touched;
> And seeing there was no place to mount up higher,
> Why should I grieve at my declining fall?—
> Farewell, fair queen: weep not for Mortimer,
> That scorns the world, and, as a traveller,
> Goes to discover countries yet unknown.

Marlowe wisely—for him—departs from the growing custom of diversifying the hard facts of history with homely fiction of a more or less comic nature. He declines to mingle clowns and courtiers. Variety is secured by a slightly fuller delineation of the secondary characters than is usual with him, with its consequent effect on the dialogue, and by abrupt changes in the political situation. Two great scenes, King Edward's abdication and his death, remain as memories with us long after we have laid the book down; but while we are reading it there are many others that touch the chords of indignation and sorrow. The verse throughout is admirable: it has shaken itself free of rant and extravagance; no longer are adjectives and nouns of splendour heaped recklessly one upon another. Yet there is nothing prosy or commonplace. The spirit of poetry and strength is everywhere.

Our last extract is from the famous abdication scene (Act V, Scene 1).

Leicester. Call them again, my lord, and speak them fair;
For, if they go, the prince shall lose his right.
K. Edward. Call thou them back; I have no power to speak.
Leicester. My lord, the king is willing to resign.
Bishop of Winchester. If he be not, let him choose.
K. Edward. O, would I might! but heavens and earth conspire
To make me miserable. Here, receive my crown.
Receive it? no, these innocent hands of mine
Shall not be guilty of so foul a crime:
He of you all that most desires my blood,
And will be called the murderer of a king,
Take it. What, are you moved? pity you me?
Then send for unrelenting Mortimer,
And Isabel, whose eyes, being turned to steel,
Will sooner sparkle fire than shed a tear.
Yet stay; for, rather than I'll look on them,
Here, here! [*Gives the crown.*]—Now, sweet God of heaven,
Make me despise this transitory pomp,
And sit for aye enthronised in heaven!
Come, death, and with thy fingers close my eyes,
Or, if I live, let me forget myself.

In the writing of *Dido, Queen of Carthage* Nash had a share. Unfortunately, it is impossible to say how much was his or to what portion of the play his work belongs. The supposition that Nash finished the play does not necessarily imply that he wrote the last part. It may have been that Marlowe originally conceived of a three act play—like *The Massacre at Paris*—and that Nash filled it out to five acts by the addition of scenes here and there. The unusual shortness of the play rather supports this theory. But it is best to let it stand uncertain. At least

this much is clear, that the genius of Marlowe is strongly present both in the character of the queen and in the splendid passages of poetry.

Again we have a well-constructed tragedy based on the loss of a dear friend and ending in death. But here the friendship is elevated to the passionate affection of a woman for her lover, and the conclusion moves our pity with double force by its picture of suffering and by the fact that the queen is the unhappy victim of a cruel fate. It is the old story of love ending in desertion and a broken heart, only the faithless lover would be true if the gods had not ordered otherwise; his regret at parting is not the simulated grief of a hollow deceiver, but the sincere emotion of a lover acting under compulsion. Constructively the play is well balanced, although the incidents of the first two acts form, perhaps, a rather too elaborate introduction to the main plot. Some initial reference to the gods is necessary to set Aeneas's action in the right light. The writer is inclined, however, to turn the occasion into an opportunity for fine picture painting when he should be pressing forward to the essential theme. The long story of the destruction of Troy, also, has no proper place in this drama, inasmuch as Aeneas's piety and prowess at that time are not even converted to use as an incentive to Dido's love. Nevertheless it must be admitted that some of the most charming passages are to be found in these first two acts. The commencement of the third act at once sets the real business of the tragedy in motion: by a delicate piece of deception Queen Dido is persuaded to clasp young Cupid, instead of little Ascanius, to her bosom—with fatal results. Before the act is over Dido and Aeneas have plighted troth, romantically, in a cave where they are sheltering together from a storm. With the fourth act

comes the first warning of impending shipwreck to their loves. Aeneas has a dream, and prepares to sail for Italy. On this occasion, however, the queen is able to overcome his doubts by bestowing upon him her crown and sceptre, thus providing him with a kingdom powerful enough to content his ambitions. Yet the gods are not to be satisfied so ; Hermes himself is sent to command the Trojan's instant departure for another shore. In vain now does Dido plead. Aeneas departs, and there is nothing left for her in her anguish but to fling herself upon the sacrificial fire raised on the pretence of curing her love. A grim pretence, verily.

Besides the two principal characters there are Dido's sister Anna, and a visiting king, Iarbas, several friends of Aeneas, Ascanius (as himself and as impersonated by Cupid), and various gods and goddesses. None of these are developed beyond a secondary pitch ; but Ascanius (or Cupid) is quite invaluable for the lightness and freedom which his presence conveys to the atmosphere about him ; while the unrequited loves of Anna and Iarbas soften for us the severity of the blow that crushes the Carthaginian queen. Aeneas himself is presented in a subdued light, his soldier's heart being fairly divided between his mistress and empire. Thus we have the figure of Dido set out in high relief. Marlowe was fond of experiments in characterization, but he never diverged more completely from the path marked out by his previous steps than when he decided to give the first place in a tragedy to a woman. Hitherto his women have not impressed us : Abigail is probably the best of a shadowy group. Suddenly, in the Queen of Carthage, womankind towers up in majesty, to hold our attention fixed in wonder and pity as she walks with strong, unsuspecting tread the steep descent to death. She is

sister to Shakespeare's Cleopatra, yet with marked individual differences. Her feelings startle us with their fierce heat and swift transitions. The fire of love flames up abruptly, driving her speech immediately into wild contradictions. She herself is amazed at the change within her. Burning to tell Aeneas her secret, yet withheld by womanly modesty, she endeavours to betray it indirectly by heaping extravagant gifts upon him. She counts over the list of her former suitors before him that he may see from the shrug of her shoulders that her affections are not placed elsewhere. Like Portia to Bassanio before he chooses the casket, she throws out hints, calls them back hastily, half lets fall the word, then breaks off the sentence, laying bare her heart to the most ordinary observer, yet despairing of his understanding her. When at last, from the tempest of desire and uncertainty, she passes into the harbour of his assured love, a rapture of content, such as the divinest music brings, fills her soul. Then the shadows begin to fall. At first the sincerity of Aeneas's love unites with her startled and clinging constancy to dispel the gathering gloom. With splendid gifts she dims the alluring brightness that draws him from her. A little longer Jove holds his hand; Aeneas's promise is till death.

Aeneas. O Dido, patroness of all our lives,
When I leave thee, death be my punishment!
Swell, raging seas! frown, wayward Destinies!
Blow, winds! threaten, ye rocks and sandy shelves!
This is the harbour that Aeneas seeks:
Let's see what tempests can annoy me now.
Dido. Not all the world can take thee from mine arms.

But the second call is imperative. With constraining pathos Dido implores him not to go. When that cannot melt his resolution the resentment of thwarted love

breaks out in passionate reproach. This again changes to the wailing of sorrow as he turns and leaves her. Anna is sent after him to beseech his stay.

Dido. Call him not wicked, sister: speak him fair,
And look upon him with a mermaid's eye. . . .
Request him gently, Anna, to return:
I crave but this—he stay a tide or two,
That I may learn to bear it patiently;
If he depart thus suddenly, I die.
Run, Anna, run; stay not to answer me.

Anna returns alone. Frantic schemes of pursuit, dangerously near to madness, at length crystallize into the last fatal resolve. The pile is made ready. Her attendants are all dismissed. One by one the articles left behind by Aeneas are devoted to the flames.

Here lie the sword that in the darksome cave
He drew, and swore by, to be true to me:
Thou shalt burn first; thy crime is worse than his.
Here lie the garment which I clothed him in
When first he came on shore: perish thou too.
These letters, lines, and perjured papers, all
Shall burn to cinders in this precious flame.

When all have been consumed she leaps into the fire and so perishes.

The character of the Queen of Carthage sufficiently demonstrates that Marlowe could paint a faithful and impressive likeness of a woman when he chose. Possibly his fiery spirit would have proved less sympathetic to a gentler type. Yet there are touches in the slighter portraits of Abigail and Queen Isabella which reveal flashes of true insight into the tender emotions of a woman's heart. Had Marlowe died before writing *Edward the Second* we should have said that he was

incapable of portraying any type of man but the abnormal and Napoleonic. He showed himself to be a daring and brilliantly successful voyager into untried seas. In the face of what he has left behind him it would be a bold critic indeed who named with confidence any aspect of tragedy as outside the empire of his genius.

The verse of *Dido, Queen of Carthage* shows no signs of retrogression from the steady advance to a more natural and perfect style which we have traced in the progress from *Tamburlaine* to *Edward the Second*. An exception to this improvement will be found in certain portions of Aeneas's long speech in the second act, of which it is probably not unjust to surmise that Nash was the author. There are in Dido's own speeches elements of wild extravagance, but they are natural to the intensity of her passion. Does not Shakespeare's Cleopatra rave in a manner no less fervid and hyperbolic? and in Enobarbus's description of her magnificence when she met Antony is there not a reminiscence of the oriental splendour of Dido's proposed fleet?

We quote part of the farewell scene between Dido and Aeneas.

Dido. But yet Aeneas will not leave his love.
Aeneas. I am commanded by immortal Jove
To leave this town and pass to Italy:
And therefore must of force.
Dido. These words proceed not from Aeneas' heart.
Aeneas. Not from my heart, for I can hardly go;
And yet I may not stay. Dido, farewell.
Dido. Farewell! is this the 'mends for Dido's love?
Do Trojans use to quit their lovers thus?
Fare well may Dido, so Aeneas stay;
I die, if my Aeneas say farewell.
Aeneas. Then let me go, and never say farewell;
Let me go: farewell: I must from hence.

Dido. These words are poison to poor Dido's soul:
O, speak like my Aeneas, like my love!
Why look'st thou toward the sea? the time hath been
When Dido's beauty chained thine eyes to her.
Am I less fair than when thou saw'st me first?
O, then, Aeneas, 'tis for grief of thee!
Say thou wilt stay in Carthage with thy queen,
And Dido's beauty will return again.
Aeneas, say, how canst thou take thy leave?
Wilt thou kiss Dido? O, thy lips have sworn
To stay with Dido! Canst thou take her hand?
Thy hand and mine have plighted mutual faith.
Therefore, unkind Aeneas, must thou say,
'Then let me go, and never say farewell'?

Aeneas. O queen of Carthage, wert thou ugly-black,
Aeneas could not choose but hold thee dear!
Yet must he not gainsay the gods' behest.

Dido. The gods! what gods be those that seek my death?
Wherein have I offended Jupiter,
That he should take Aeneas from mine arms?
O, no! the gods weigh not what lovers do:
It is Aeneas calls Aeneas hence.

Summarizing, in one short paragraph, the advance in tragedy inaugurated by Kyd and Marlowe, we record the progress made in characterization, plot structure, and verse, and in the treatment of history. A play has now become interesting for its delineation of character, not merely for its events or 'story'. One or two figures monopolize the attention by their lofty passions, their sufferings, and their fate. We look on at a tremendous conflict waged between will and circumstance, between right and wrong, or we watch the gradual decay of goodness by the action of a poisonous thought introduced into the mind. The plot has undergone a similar intensification. With resistless evolution it bears the chief characters along to the fatal hour of decision or action, then

drags them down the descent which the wrong choice or the unwise deed suddenly places at their feet. Our sympathies are drawn out, we take sides in the cause, and demand that at least justice shall prevail at the end. There is an art, too, in this evolution, a close interweaving of events, a chain of cause and effect; a certain harmony and balance are maintained, so that our feelings are neither jerked to extremes nor worn out by strain. Even the history play has freed itself to some extent from the leading strings of chronology, claiming the right to make the same appeal to our common instincts as any other play. Verse has taken a mighty bound from formalism to the free intoxicating air of poetry and nature. Men and women no longer exchange dull speeches; they converse with easy spontaneity and delight us by the beauty of their language. A poet may be a dramatist at last without feeling that his imagination must be held back like a restive horse lest the decorum of human speech be violated.

Arden of Feversham (? 1590–2), by its persistent but almost certainly mistaken association with Shakespeare's name, has received a wider fame than some better plays. Into the question of its authorship, however, we need not enter. Of itself it has qualities that call for reference in this place. Its early date, also, brings it within the sphere of our discussion of the growth of English drama.

Far more than any play of Kyd's, this drama, though it has no ghost and slays but one man on the stage, merits the title of a Tragedy of Blood. Murder is the theme, murder and adulterous love, and it is 'kill! kill! kill!' all the time. From the pages of Holinshed the writer carefully gathered up every horrible detail, every dreadful revelation concerning a brutal crime which had horrified

England forty years before; and while the red and reeking abomination was still hot in his mind, sat down to the awful task of re-enacting it. The victim was summoned from his grave, the murderers from the gallows, the woman from the charred stake at Canterbury, to glut the appetite of a shuddering audience. Too revolting to be described in detail, the plot sets forth the story of Alice Arden's illicit love for Mosbie, her determination to win liberty by the murder of her husband, the many unsuccessful attempts to bring about that end, and the final act which brought death upon them all.

The art of sensationalism in drama, as in anything else, is not a great one; it is not to be measured by its effect upon the mind, for the crudest appeal to our instinctive dread of death will often suffice to hold our attention spellbound. It deals in uncertainty, darkness, unsuspecting innocence, hair-breadth escapes, and an ever-impending but still delayed ruin. None of these are wanting to this play; in this respect the dramatist was fortunate in his subject. No less than seven times the spectator—for the effect upon the reader is naturally much less—feels his nerves tingle, his pulse beat faster, as he waits in instant expectation of seeing murder committed. The realism of everyday scenery, the street, the high road, the ferry, the inn, the breakfast room, cry out with telling emphasis that it is fact, hard deadly fact, which is being shown; not the idle invention of an overheated brain. But while these features impress the action upon our memory, they do not raise it to the level of great drama. For this the supreme requirement is truth to human nature. It is not enough that the actors arrest our attention by their appearance, their speeches and their deeds. Freaks and lunatics might do that. They must be human as we are, moved by impulses common,

in some degree, to us all. Generally speaking, abnormality is weakness. It needs to be strongly built upon a foundation of natural qualities to achieve success. Especially is this so when the surrounding conditions are such as belong to ordinary existence. The application of this principle reveals the essential weakness of *Arden of Feversham*. Carefully, almost minutely, the details of everyday life are gathered together. The merchant sees to the unloading of his goods at the quay, the boatman urges his ferry to and fro, the apprentice takes down his shutters, the groom makes love to the serving-maid, travellers meeting on the road halt for a chat and part with no more serious word spoken than a hearty invitation to dine; on all sides life is seen flowing in the ordinary current, with nothing worse than a piece of malicious tittle-tattle to disturb the calmness of the surface. Into this setting the author places as monstrous a group of villains as ever walked the earth. Black Will and Shakbag belong to the darkest cesspool of London iniquity. Clarke the Painter has no individuality beyond a readiness to poison all and sundry for a reward. Michael would be a murderer were he not a coward. Greene is a revengeful sleuth-hound, tracking his victim down relentlessly from place to place. Arden is a miser in business, and a weak, gullible fool at home, alternately raging with jealous suspicion and fawning with fatuous trustfulness upon the man who is wronging him. Mosbie is a cold-blooded, underhand villain whose pious resolutions and protestations of love could only deceive those blinded by fate, and whose preference for crooked, left-handed methods is in tune with his vile intention of murdering the woman who loves him. Alice, the representative of womankind among these beast-men, the wife, the passionately loving mistress, is an arch-deceiver, an absolutely

brazen liar and murderess, unblushing and tireless in soliciting the affection of a man who hardly cares for her, desperately enamoured. Alone in the group Franklin is endowed with the ordinary human revulsion from folly and wickedness, but his character is sketched too lightly to relieve the darkness. Such creatures may fascinate us by their defiance of the laws that bind us. Alice, particularly, does so. She possesses—as Michael does, to a less degree—at least a few natural traits; her conscience is not quite dead, and her love is strong, although even this is represented as a huge deformity, driving her to the negation of that womanhood to which it should belong. Single scenes, too, if seen or read in isolation from the main body of the play, have a certain individual strength, giving us glimpses of the workings of a human heart. But the play as a whole offers no inspiration, presents no aspects of beauty, holds up no mirror to ourselves. One lesson it teaches, that happiness cannot be won by crime. Alice and Mosbie are never permitted to escape from the consequences of their sin, in the form of anxiety, suspicion, remorse, fear, mutual recrimination, and death. But, throughout, the dramatist's purpose is not art. He is the apostle of realism, coarsened by a love of the horrible and unclean. The power of his realism is undeniable. His two protagonists are line for line portraits of the beings they are intended to represent. The silhouettes of Black Will and Shakbag are almost as perfect. It is when we compare *Arden of Feversham* with *Macbeth* that we realize how the meanness of the action and the comparative absence of morality outweigh any accuracy of detail, degrading the dramatist to the level of a mere purveyor of excitement. The truth is, even the interest palls, for there is no skill displayed in the evolution of the plot. The story is merely unrolled in a series of murderous

attempts which agitate us less and less as they are repeated, until, at the end, we are in danger of not caring whether Arden is killed or not.

Among the eccentricities of this anonymous author's misdirected ability is the disregard of appropriateness in the allocation of speeches to the various characters. He is a poet; we can hardly believe that his work would otherwise have survived the acting of it. Yet, as has been frequently pointed out, one of the most delicate passages in the play is spoken by the detestable ruffian, Shakbag, while Mosbie and even Michael soliloquize in language of poetic imagery. In his handling of blank verse he has not travelled beyond the limits of end-stopt lines, and too often he gives it the false balance of unrhymed couplets; nevertheless much that is vigorous and impressive forces the rhythm into a firm and brisk response. The art of conversation in verse has advanced to complete mastery. These features will be seen in the following extracts.

(1)

[Mosbie *regretfully compares his past and present states.*]

Disturbed thoughts drives me from company
And dries my marrow with their watchfulness;
Continual trouble of my moody brain
Feebles my body by excess of drink,
And nips me as the bitter North-east wind
Doth check the tender blossoms in the spring.
Well fares the man, howe'er his cates do taste,
That tables not with foul suspicion;
And he but pines amongst his delicates,
Whose troubled mind is stuffed with discontent.
My golden time was when I had no gold;
Though then I wanted, yet I slept secure;
My daily toil begat me night's repose,
My night's repose made daylight fresh to me.

But since I climbed the top bough of the tree
And sought to build my nest among the clouds,
Each gentle starry gale doth shake my bed,
And makes me dread my downfall to the earth.
But whither doth contemplation carry me?
The way I seek to find, where pleasure dwells,
Is hedged behind me that I cannot back,
But needs must on, although to danger's gate.
Then, Arden, perish thou by that decree.

(2)

[*The last arrangements have been made for the murder and only* ARDEN *is awaited.*]

Will. Give me the key: which is the counting house?
Alice. Here would I stay and still encourage you,
But that I know how resolute you are.
Shakbag. Tush, you are too faint-hearted; we must do it.
Alice. But Mosbie will be there, whose very looks
Will add unwonted courage to my thought,
And make me the first that shall adventure on him.
Will. Tush, get you gone; 'tis we must do the deed.
When this door opens next, look for his death.
[*Exeunt* WILL *and* SHAKBAG.]
Alice. Ah, would he now were here that it might open!
I shall no more be closed in Arden's arms,
That like the snakes of black Tisiphone
Sting me with their embracings: Mosbie's arms
Shall compass me; and, were I made a star,
I would have none other spheres but those.
There is no nectar but in Mosbie's lips!
Had chaste Diana kissed him, she, like me,
Would grow love sick, and from her watery bower
Fling down Endymion and snatch him up:
Then blame not me that slay a silly man
Not half so lovely as Endymion.
[*Here enters* MICHAEL.]
Michael. Mistress, my master is coming hard by.
Alice. Who comes with him?
Michael. Nobody but Mosbie.

Alice. That 's well, Michael. Fetch in the tables,
And when thou has done, stand before the counting-house door.
Michael. Why so?
Alice. Black Will is locked within to do the deed.
Michael. What? shall he die to-night?
Alice. Ay, Michael.
Michael. But shall not Susan know it?
Alice. Yes, for she'll be as secret as ourselves.
Michael. That 's brave. I'll go fetch the tables.
Alice. But, Michael, hark to me a word or two:
When my husband is come in, lock the street door;
He shall be murdered or[1] the guests come in.

Arden of Feversham is a play which cannot be passed over unnoticed in any historical treatment of the drama. For it opened up a new and rich field to writers of tragedies by its selection of characters from the ordinary paths of life to reveal the passions of the human heart. Kyd and Marlowe had sought for subjects in the little known world of kings' courts or the still less familiar regions of immeasurable wealth and power. This other writer found what he wanted in his neighbour's house. His most direct disciples are the authors (uncertain) of *A Yorkshire Tragedy* and *A Warning for Fair Women*, but his influence may be traced in the work of many well-known later dramatists. On the other hand the play marks a retreat from the standard set by previous tragedies. In its deliberate use of horror for horror's sake it fell away—dragging others after it—from the conception of drama as a noble instrument in the instruction and elevation of the people.

[1] before.

APPENDIX

THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE

A word remains to be added with regard to the 'Stage' for which Lyly and Marlowe wrote. When we took leave of the Miracle Plays we left them with a movable 'pageant', open-air performances, and a large body of carefully trained actors, who, however, normally followed a trade, only turning aside to the task of rehearsing when the annual festival drew near. The whole business of dramatic representation was in the hands of public bodies —the Mayor and Corporation, if the town could boast of such. Later years saw the appearance of the professional actor, by more humble designation termed a strolling player. Many small companies—four or five men and perhaps a couple of boys—came into existence, wandering over England to win the pence and applause guaranteed by the immense popularity of their entertainments. But the official eye learnt to look upon them with suspicion, and it was not long before they fell under condemnation as vagrants. In 1572 all but licensed companies were brought within the scope of the vagrancy laws. Those exempt were the few fortunate ones who had secured the patronage of a nobleman, and, greedy of monopoly, had pressed, successfully, for this prohibitory decree against their irregular rivals. From this date onwards we read only of such companies as the Queen's Company, the Earl of Leicester's Company, the Chamberlain's Company and the Admiral's Company. Yet while their duties would primarily be concerned with the amusement of their

patrons, they found many occasions to offer their services elsewhere. Travelling companies, therefore, still continued to carry into every part of England the delights of play-acting. It is a pleasing conjecture that the genius of the boy, Shakespeare, was first quickened by seeing a performance in his native town.

We have said that a few men and one or two boys would suffice for a company. The boys, of course, were to take the female parts, as women-actors were not seen on the stage until some time after Shakespeare's death, and only came into general favour after the Restoration. Although some plays included a large number of characters, the author was generally careful so to arrange their exits and entrances that not more than four or five were required on the stage at one time. Thus, in the list of dramatis personae for *Like Will to Like* the twelve characters are distributed amongst five actors: four actors are shown to be sufficient for the eleven characters of *New Custom*; and the thirty-eight characters of *Cambyses* are grouped to fit eight players.

When on tour a company began its stay in any town with a visit to the mayor (or his equivalent), before whom a first performance was given. His approval secured for the company a fee and the right of acting. Thus the practice of public control over the Guild 'Miracles' was extended to these independent performances in the form of a mayoral censorship. This control, in London, was placed in the hands of the Court Master of the Revels, who thereby became the State dramatic censor with power to prohibit the performance of any play that offended his taste.

In addition to these companies of men there were, in and near London, companies of boys carefully trained to act. At the public schools of Eton and Westminster

histrionics was included amongst the subjects taught. The singing school at St. Paul's studied the art with equal industry. Most famous of all, the choir boys of the royal chapel took rank as expert performers. It was doubtless for Eton, Westminster, Merchant Taylors' and other schools that such plays as *The Disobedient Child* and *The Marriage of Wit and Science* were written. It was, we may remember, the head-master of Eton who wrote *Ralph Roister Doister*. Lyly's plays, acted at Court, were all performed either by 'the children of Paul's' or 'Her Majesty's children'. This may partly account for the great number and prominence of his female characters as compared with those found in the comedies of Greene and Peele; it will also suggest a reason for his liberal introduction of songs.

Court performances, however, were also given by young men of rank for amusement or to honour the queen. *Gorboduc* was presented before Elizabeth by 'the gentlemen of the Inner Temple'. 'The Gentlemen of Gray's Inn' performed *The Misfortunes of Arthur* at the Court at Greenwich; Francis Bacon was one of the actors. In the latter part of the reign the queen's own 'company' consisted of the best London professional actors, and these were summoned every Christmas to entertain Her Majesty with the latest plays. At Oxford and Cambridge many plays were staged, the preference for some time apparently lying with classical representation in the original tongue.

On these Court and University performances large sums of money were spent. It may be assumed therefore that considerable attention was paid to the mounting and staging of a play. Possibly painted scenery and even the luxury of a completely curtained-off stage were provided. Every advantageous adjunct to the dramatist's

art known in that day would be at the service of Lyly. But it was otherwise with Marlowe and those who wrote for the public stage. It is this last which we must consider.

In Exeter at least, and possibly in other towns, a playhouse was built long before such a thing was known in the vicinity of London. We shall probably be right, however, in judging the major portion of the country by its metropolis and assuming that, until 1572 or thereabouts, actors and audiences had to manage without buildings specially designed for their purpose. Very probably the old 'pageants' (or 'pagonds') were refurbished and brought to light when the need arose; and in this case the actors would have the spectators in a circle around them. Inn-yards, however—those of that day were constructed with galleries along three sides—proved to be more convenient for the audience, inasmuch as the galleries provided comfortable seats above the rabble for those who cared to pay for them. The stage was then erected either in the midst or at the fourth side, projecting out into the yard. In such surroundings the popular Morality-Interludes and Interludes proper were performed.

In the midst of the wide popularity of the drama arose Puritanism, full of condemnation. Keeping our attention upon London as the centre of things, we see this new enemy waging a fierce battle with the supporters of the stage. The latter included the Queen and her Privy Council; the former found spokesmen in the mayor and City Fathers. Between Privy Council and Corporation there could be no compromise, for the Corporation insisted that within its jurisdiction dramatic performances should be entirely suppressed. The yearly outbreaks of the plague, with its weekly death-roll of thirty, forty, fifty, periodically compelled the summer performances to cease, and lent themselves as

a powerful argument against packed gatherings of dirty and clean, infected and uninfected, together. At last one of the leading companies, fearing that time would bring victory to the Puritans and to themselves extinction, decided to solve the difficulty by migration beyond the jurisdiction of the mayor. Accordingly, about the year 1572, 'The Theatre' was built outside the city boundary and occupied by Leicester's company. Not long afterwards other companies followed suit, and 'The Curtains' and 'Newington Butts' were erected. After that many other theatres rose. In 1599 was built the famous Globe Theatre in which most of Shakespeare's plays were represented. But the three earlier theatres (and perhaps 'The Rose') were probably all that Marlowe ever knew.

What we know of the Elizabethan theatre is based on information concerning the Globe, Fortune and Swan Theatres. From this a certain clear conception — not agreed upon, however, in all points by critics—may be deduced with regard to the earlier ones. They were round or hexagonal in shape. The stage was placed with its back to the wall and projected well into the centre. The spectators were gathered about its three sides, the poor folk standing in the area and crushing right up to it, the rich folk occupying seats in the galleries that formed the horse-shoe round the area. A roof covered the galleries but not the rest of the building—the first completely roofed theatre was probably not built before 1596. Performances took place between two and five o'clock in the afternoon. The title of the piece was posted outside; a flag flying from a turret informed playgoers in the city that a performance was about to take place, and the sound of a trumpet announced the commencement of the play. An orchestra was in attendance, not so much to enliven the intervals—for they were few and brief—

as to lend its aid to the effect of certain scenes, in exactly the same way as it is used to-day.

Of the stage itself little can be said positively, nor are surmises about the Swan or Globe stage necessarily applicable to its predecessors. But the following description will serve as a fair conjecture. It was divided into two parts, a front and back stage, separated by a curtain. By this device the back scene could be prepared while the front stage was occupied, or two scenes could be presented together, as in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, or a second scene could be added to the main one, as occurs when Rasni, in *A Looking-Glass for London and England*, 'draws the curtains' and reveals Remilia struck with lightning. There was no curtain before the front stage. At the rear of the back stage was a fixed structure like the outside of a house with doors and an upper balcony. The doors led into the dressing rooms, and through them, as through the curtain if the front stage only were in use, the exits and entrances were made. The balcony was used in many ways familiar to us in Shakespeare's works; when, in the Second Part of *Tamburlaine*, the Governor of Babylon enters 'upon the walls' we recognize that he is on the balcony. A roof extended over the whole or part of the stage to protect the actors from rain; but it was also made use of as a hiding-place from which angels or goddesses could descend. In *Alphonsus, King of Arragon* Venus's exit is managed thus: 'If you can conveniently, let a chair come down from the top of the stage and draw her up.' The stage floor was fitted with a trap-door; through it Queen Elinor, in *Edward the First*, disappears and re-appears; through it 'a flame of fire' appears and 'Radagon is swallowed', in *A Looking-Glass for London and England*.

As far as can be gathered from records, there was no

great attempt to preserve, in the actor's dresses, the local colouring of the play. Nevertheless various easy and obviously required concessions would be made. Kings and queens would dress magnificently, mechanics and serving-men humbly. In *Orlando Furioso* we read that Orlando is to enter 'attired as a madman' and that Marsilius and Mandricard are to appear 'like Palmers'; in *Alphonsus, King of Arragon* 'Calchas rises up in a white surplice and a cardinal's mitre', and in *Edward the First* Longshanks figures 'in Friar's weeds'. The list could be continued. It is practically certain that there was no painted scenery, the absence of which would greatly facilitate the expeditious passage from scene to scene. Stage properties, however, were probably a valuable part of the theatrical belongings. If we glance over the stage-directions in the plays of Greene, Peele, Kyd and Marlowe, we come upon such visible objects as a throne, a bower, a bed, a table, a tomb, a litter, a cage, a chariot, a hearse, a tree; more elaborate would be Alphonsus's canopy with a king's head at each of three corners, Bungay's dragon shooting fire, Remilia's 'globe seated in a ship', the 'hand from out a cloud with a burning sword' (*A Looking-Glass*), and the Brazen Head casting out flakes of fire (*Alphonsus*).

Considering Marlowe's plays in the light of this information we shall be obliged to admit that they stood a good chance of having very fair justice done to them. The points in which the staging differed from our modern methods were in favour of greater realism. Daylight is more truthful than foot-lights are; and if there was any poverty in the setting, so much the more was attention centred upon the actors, who are declared, by the authors themselves, to have attained a high level of excellence. Fame has not yet forgotten the names of Burbage and Alleyn.

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